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Broadus
The laureateship

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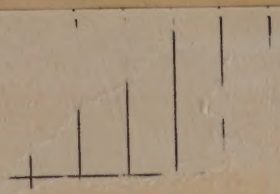

THE LAUREATESHIP

The LAUREATESHIP

A STUDY

OF THE OFFICE

OF

POET LAUREATE IN ENGLAND

WITH SOME ACCOUNT

OF

THE POETS

North Central College Library
Naperville, Illinois

By *Edmund Kemper Broadus*

Professor of English at the University of Alberta

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PREFACE

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'I MUCH doubt', wrote Gibbon, of the English laureateship, 'whether any age or court can produce a similar establishment of a stipendiary poet, who, in every reign and at all events, is bound to furnish twice a year a measure of praise and verse, such as may be sung in the chapel, and, I believe in the presence, of the sovereign.' The office has long since been relieved of the obligation to which Gibbon objected; but the laureate is still a stipendiary of the court, and the English laureateship, with an unbroken continuity of two centuries and a half, remains unique among national institutions.

It would seem, therefore, in spite of its low estate during the period to which Gibbon referred, and the disesteem which it has inherited from that period, that a serious study of the usages, precedents, and traditions which contributed to the establishment of the office, and of the history of the office itself, may be justified. As far as I know, this attempt has not been made hitherto. Ben Jonson's learned friend, John Selden, gathered a few notes on the subject for the second edition of his *Titles of Honour*. Warton in his *History of English Poetry*, and Malone in his 'Life of Dryden', each gave a few pages to the early 'King's poets' and traditional 'laureates'. Austin and Ralph (1853), Walter Hamilton (1879), and W. Forbes Gray (1914) have compiled biographies of the English poets laureate. All these biographers have depended upon Warton's brief and often inaccurate notes for their observations on the laureate tradition. No one hitherto has been at pains to study the tradition in the making, or, in respect to the actual laureateship itself, to subordinate the mass of biographical detail to a critical examination of the laureate's fulfilment of the explicit or implicit obligations of the office. Perhaps this has been due to the feeling that an office which at one time hovered on the verge of the ridiculous, is not worth serious study; but an office which

Wordsworth, in his old age, was proud to accept as reflecting 'a sense of the national importance of Poetic Literature'; which Dryden and Tennyson have adorned; and which is now sustained by a poet of fine and noble qualities, is not beneath the attention of the serious student.

In venturing this study, I have not attempted to deal with the laureateship as it has existed more or less sporadically in other countries, except in so far as foreign usage appeared to contribute to the establishment of the office in England. Nor, in dealing with the early English precedents for the laureateship, has it seemed desirable to undertake an essay on court minstrelsy in the vein of Bishop Percy. That the prototype of the modern poet laureate is to be found in the ancient *versificator regis* and King's poet is a matter of common knowledge, and I have therefore contented myself with the accumulation of a series of brief examples of these early types. On the other hand, as the kinship of the term poet laureate, in its early application as a title of honour, to the purely academic baccalaureate degree is not so generally recognized, I have felt justified in undertaking a more detailed study of this matter.

The history of the actual laureateship, i. e. the office carrying with it the title of poet laureate and a pension from the crown, and establishing its holder as a functionary of the court, must indubitably begin with the appointment of Dryden in the year 1668, for the simple and sufficient reason that none of his traditional predecessors received such an appointment with such a title. The tradition that poets who figured prominently at court or who happened to receive pensions from the crown for 'services of tongue or pen' were in some sense *official* poets laureate, is so persistent, however, that it has seemed desirable to make a thorough study of the development of this tradition, especially in the case of Ben Jonson and Davenant.

The actual laureates from John Dryden to Robert Bridges I have attempted to study solely in the light of their office, adducing only such biographical details as were pertinent thereto, and eschewing the anecdotal by-play which has

been characteristic of the various 'Lives of the Poets Laureate' previously published. For reasons which are not difficult to discover, the office has often been unfortunate in its holders; but however much the circumstances of certain periods of its history have conspired to cheapen it, there has never been a moment when it was without great possibilities. Even in the eighteenth century, the laureates were not restricted to perfunctory laudation. The very New Year and Birthday Odes themselves might have been—though unfortunately they usually were not—something other than empty adulation; and in the celebration of great events, the laureate always had the opportunity—however little he availed himself of it—of making himself the voice of England. It is with this conception that I have approached the work of the successive laureates. If the results have been in many cases disappointing, the possibility has always been there; and, even in the most jejune period, there have been instances not a few when the laureate seemed at least to catch a glimpse of it. And from the moment when, thanks to Southey, the laureates found themselves no longer 'obliged by sack and pension', it has been possible to derive a genuine satisfaction from this approach to the subject.

It remains for me to acknowledge my indebtedness to the present laureate, Mr. Robert Bridges, for permission to reprint several of his poems; to Sir Herbert Warren, President of Magdalen College, Oxford, for extracts from an unpublished letter of Gladstone's and from other correspondence in his possession; to the Editor of *The Nation* (N. Y.) for permission to incorporate in the second chapter of this book a brief study of the relation of the terms 'poet laureate' and 'baccalaureate' which appeared in that journal; to Messrs. Hubert Hall and M. S. Radcliffe of the Record Office, and to the officers of the Bodleian and of the libraries of Harvard University and the University of Chicago for much kindness in facilitating research; and to Professor C. H. Firth and Mr. Percy Simpson of Oxford, to Professors G. L. Kittredge and J. L. Lowes of Harvard, and to Professor R. K. Gordon of the University of Alberta for useful suggestions.

And finally I wish to record my deep sense of obligation to three others, without whom this book would have fared ill indeed: to Sir Walter Raleigh for helpful advice, and a generous encouragement which has meant much to me; to Mr. David Nichol Smith for helpful criticism and a multitude of valuable suggestions; and to my wife for assistance so varied and manifold that there are few pages of this book that have not profited by it.

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I

KING'S POET

'Þær waes hearpen swêg
swutol sang scopes.'—*Beowulf.*

They had menstrelles of moche honours,
Fydelers, sytolyrs, and trompoters.
Thomas Chestre, *Sir Launfal.*

I

The tradition of the laureate, the poet whose office is to sing or recite before the king, goes back to the very beginnings of literature upon English soil. It is no straining of terms to say that the Anglo-Saxon *scop* is the first poet-laureate, for in the household of the petty king he holds a position which closely resembles the office of the court-poet of later times. In the *Lament* of Deor, we catch a glimpse of the scôp, holding a good retainership in right of his skill in song, only to lose it to a rival poet who surpasses him: 'I was long scop of the Heodenings, dear to my lord: my name was Deor. I had a good retainership, a gracious lord for many years, until this Heorrenda, the song-skilled man, obtained the rights of the land, which the protector of earls granted to me before.'

To various lays this ancient court-singer touched his harp, his 'game-wood' (*gomen-wudu*). Before the christianization of Britain, he found his themes in the ancient glories and heroic deeds of his race; in later times, in the lore learned at the feet of Christian missionaries. The epic of Beowulf, with its pagan origin and Christian interpolations, reflects both phases. Even as Demodocus 'took up the tale' of the Trojan war to entertain the visiting Odysseus, so does Hrothgar's scop take up the tale of the Finn saga to entertain the visiting Beowulf. Elsewhere in the poem, on the other hand:

He sang who knew
Tales of the early time of man.
How the Almighty made the earth,
Fairest fields enfolded by water,
Set, triumphant, sun and moon,
For a light to lighten the land-dwellers,
And braided bright the breast of earth
With limbs and leaves, made life for all
Of mortal beings that breathe and move.[1]

[1] *Beowulf*, ll. 90–98, trans. Gummere.

No less a king's poet was the gleeman who, albeit without official status in any royal household, wandered far and sang before many kings. The earliest poem which has come down to us from Anglo-Saxon times records the adventures of such a wanderer. There are few limitations of time and space in Widsith's story—a story which must be taken rather as a boast of the prowess of the gleeman than as a literal autobiography. He has

> Traveled through strange lands and learnt
> Of good and evil in the spacious world.

He has journeyed not only through southern Europe, but also among the Israelites, the Egyptians, the Medes and Persians. At the Burgundian court, Guthere has given him a circlet;

> A welcome treasure for reward of song.

In Italy, Albuin, 'most liberal of heart', has given him rings and bright collars; and Eormanric, King of the Goths, has been lavish of gifts:

> A collar of six hundred sceats of gold
> Counted in coin, he gave me—beaten gold.

In that world of great distances and scant intercommunication, Widsith is at once entertainer and news-bearer, minstrel and journalist. He has won prizes in competition with other poets. Kings everywhere welcome and reward him; and even those who do not delight to honour him shower gifts upon him so much the more, because they fear his dispraise.

Just as the English minstrel wanders forth to other lands, so do the king's poets of other countries find their way to English soil. Gunlaug Snakestongue

'setting sail from Norway, where he had got into some trouble by his bold tongue and ready hand, came to London Bridge and found King Æthelred Eadgarsson ruling in England. He goes before the king who asks him whence he came and who he was. Gunlaug answers and adds, "and I have come to see you, my lord, because I have made a poem about you and I should like you to listen to it." The king said that he would, and Gunlaug delivered his poem boldly. The king thanks him and gives him a scarlet cloak lined with the finest fur, and laced down the skirt, for his poet's fee. He then goes to Dublin. At that time King Sigtrygg Silkbeard, the son of Anlaf-Cuaran and Kormlaith, was ruling over Ireland, and he had been ruling but a short while. He received the poet well, and Gunlaug said, "I have made a poem on you, and I should like to have silence."

The king answered, " No man before up to this time has done this and brought me a poem. Thou shalt surely be heard." Then he delivered his song of praise. The king thanked him for his poem, and called to his treasurer, saying, " How shall this poem be repaid ? " " How do you wish to repay it, my lord ? " answers he. " How will it be paid ", says the king, " if I give him two ships of burden ? " The treasurer answers, " That is too much, my lord," [1] says he ; " other kings give goodly gifts as poets' fees,—good swords, or good gold rings." The king gave him his coat of new scarlet, a laced kirtle, a cloak of noble fur, and a gold ring of great price.' [2]

It would be interesting to compare these ' laureate ' tributes with the perfunctory odes which the official laureates of a later day produced in praise of their sovereigns, but unfortunately only fragments of the early ' praise-poems ' have been preserved. The *burden* or *stave* of Gunlaug's tribute to Æthelræd is quite colourless—' All the host reverence the generous King of England like God himself. All men pay homage to the valiant Æthelræd ; ' [3] but the *Praise on Sigtrygg, King of Dublin*, is a choice instance of the adaptability of our tenth-century courtier-poet. ' Tastes differ,' thinks Gunlaug. ' What suited pious Æthelræd would hardly appeal to sturdy Sigtrygg. I will put a little more verve into it, and incidentally be more explicit about what is due the king's poet.' And thus runs the *burden* of the *Praise on Sigtrygg* : ' Sigtrygg feeds the ogress-charger with carrion. I know the distinctions of speech. Now I will praise a scion of kings, he is Cuaran's son. The king will not grudge me a gold ring, he trains himself to liberality. This I know. Tell me, O King, if thou hast ever heard a more costly poem. It is all in Encomium metre.' [4]

II

At the very period when Norse Gunlaug was paying his poetical tribute in the court of Æthelræd, his kinsfolk in Normandy, voluntary exiles from the stern and forbidding land of the north, were learning a finer and more graceful art of minstrelsy. And in the very year in

[1] History repeats itself—even for poets. When Raleigh, bringing with him the first three books of the *Faery Queen*, appealed to Elizabeth on Spenser's behalf, ' Her Majesty, so the tradition runs, " ordered a goodly sum to be awarded to the newe poete." The penurious Lord Treasurer . . . demurred, dropping *sotto voce* the question, " What ? All this for a song ? " '—*Spenser*, ed. Grosart, i. 164.

[2] *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, ii. 109.

[3] Trans. Vigfusson and Powell, *C. P. B.* ii. 111.

[4] Ibid.

which a later king's poet—or earl's poet, as he styled himself—Jarnor Jarlescald, was singing his dirge over Harold Hardrada, dead at Stamford Bridge,[1] William's minstrel-led army struck the blow at Hastings which was destined to change all the currents of English life.

For our laureate tradition, there is more than an incidental interest in Wace's description of the minstrel Taillefer, who, as he rode before Duke William, went singing of Charlemagne and Roland and Oliver and the vassals who died at Rencevals; and who, when he saw the English approaching, prayed as the guerdon of his minstrelsy that he might strike the first blow in the battle. Taillefer embodies the scaldic traditions of his Northmen ancestors and the more delicate art of minstrelsy cultivated in the fields of Normandy. And Wace himself, who tells the story, unites in matter if not in manner the two types of minstrelsy; for in the *Roman de Rou* he recites, like any scald, the exploits of Rollo and of Rollo's race; and in the *Brut*, he essays chivalric themes, and dips into that storehouse of Arthurian legend beloved of the Celtic bard.

With the Norman minstrel tuning his harp to Celtic themes, the story of the old king's poets comes full cycle, and 'former times shake hands with latter'; for if, as Sophus Bugge supposes, the scaldic poetry began in the Viking raids of the eighth and ninth centuries under the influence of the Irish *filid* or chief bard,[2] the Norman was but returning to the very quarter whence his ancestors had derived their first lessons. The 'very ancient book containing a history of the Britons' which Geoffrey of Monmouth, himself a Welshman, gave to the world as the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, caught the romantic imagination of the Norman. Gaimar, Wace, and, most of all, Chrestien de Troyes, developed it. The minstrels in the households of the Norman barons, king's poets of their little principalities, sang of it. And it is even a matter of record (if of somewhat dubious record) that Henry II proposed to hold Brittany as the mythical Arthur's vassal.[3]

But the stories of Arthur were not the only themes of these Norman minstrels and king's poets.

[1] See *C. P. B.* ii. 192.

[2] Cf. Chambers, *Mediaeval Stage*, i. 43 *n.*

[3] '*Hanc* (*sc. Brittanniam*) *sub iure tuo, sub pace tua, teneamus; Ius tibi, pax nobis, totaque terra simul*'
are the closing words of King Henry's letter to Arthur, as recorded in the *Draco Norm.* I. ii, c. 22, vv. 1279, 1280. See Kate Norgate's *England under the Angevin Kings*, ii. 447 *n.*

Men yernis rimes for to here,

wrote the author of the *Cursor Mundi*,

And romans rede in maner sere
Of Alexandre the conqueroure,
Of July Cesar th'emperoure,
Of Grece and Troy the strong stryf,
There many thousand lost ther lyf,
Of Brut that bern bold of hand,
The first conqueroure of England,
Of Kyng Artour that was so riche,
Was non in his tyme him liche,

and also

How Kyng Charles and Roland faught,
With sarazins nold they no saught
Of Tristrem and his leif Ysot,
How he for her becom a sot,
Of Jonek and of Isombras,
Of Ydoyne and of Amadas,
Stories als of serekin thinges
Of pryncis, prelates and of kinges,
Songis sere of selcouth rime,
As English, Frankis and Latine.

It is not to be understood, of course, that the heterogeneous army of minstrels who poured into England in the century following the Conquest afford, in their collective activities, any analogy to the office whose tradition we are tracing. The 'harpurs and gigours', who multiplied so fast that by 1290, four hundred and twenty-six of them could assemble at the wedding of Margaret of England with John of Brabant,[1] were after all only popular entertainers, as ready to display their powers before an assemblage of peasants on a street-corner, as before the nobleman's household in the courtyard of the castle. Many of them too were only minstrels by courtesy, better versed in the *ars tombare* than in the *ars poetica*. The variety of their function is illustrated by a list of payments made to entertainers at the Pentecost feast of 1306 (Edward III), which names more than one hundred and fifty performers. Of these, in addition to the five who stand at the head of the list and enjoy the title of 'King'—'Le Roy de Champaigne,' 'Le Roy Capenny', &c.—are 'harpours' (one '*qui est ove le Patriarke*'), 'gigours', 'trumpours', 'tabourers', 'nakariers,' 'gitarers', 'crouders', 'citharistae', in bewildering confusion.[2]

[1] T. Wright, *Domestic Manners and Sentiments*, p. 181.

[2] This interesting document (from the Exchequer Rolls) is reprinted entire in Chambers, *Mediaeval Stage*, Appendix C.

Amidst this general vogue of minstrelsy we should expect to find a representative of the art included among the official household of the king, and it is here that we may look for the direct ancestral line of the official poet-laureate. He does not appear at first, it is true, under the title of King's poet, and his duties were probably only those of musician or general entertainer, or even court jester; but he is at least preparing the way for his more august successor. Thus William I had his *ioculator regis* to whom he gave estates in Gloucestershire,[1] and Henry I his *mimus regis* Rahere, who was so enriched by his royal master that he could afford to found the priory of St. Bartholomew at Smithfield.[2]

But with the accession of Henry II the way is opened at court for figures of more consequence than *ioculator* or *mimus*. For the first time the court becomes a centre of literary activity. Henry of Huntingdon, whose death came early in the reign, succeeds nevertheless in bringing his *Chronicle* up to the king's accession, and interlards its pages with narrative and panegyric poems of his own composition. Henry surrounds himself with advisers who are men of culture. Roger of Hoveden, Gervase of Tilbury, Ralph de Diceto, Richard of Devizes, the anonymous authors of the *Gesta Regis Henrici* and the *Gesta Stephani*, are writing history. John of Salisbury is moralizing on the statesmanship of his day and expounding Aristotle. William of Newburgh is philosophizing history. Ranulph de Glanvil is classifying and expounding English law. Giraldus Cambrensis is writing marvellous descriptions of Ireland and Wales. In this 'paradise of clerks', whose formal correspondence is interlarded with quotations

[1] '*Berdic, ioculator regis, habet iij villas, et ibi v carucatas nil reddentes.*'—Domesday Book, Gloc., f. 162.

[2] Few details of Rahere's career in Henry's court are available. Dugdale (*Monasticon*, Lond. 1830, vol. vi, pt. 1, pp. 291–2) quotes from Cott. MS. Vesp. B. IX an account of his conversion, and his foundation, 'in contrition for an ill spent life', of the Hospital and Priory of St. Bartholomew (1123). Of his previous history we learn only that he was of humble birth, that he became a strolling minstrel and jester, that ultimately he forced his way to the royal palace and became the favourite and familiar of the King. *Eo modo regi, magnatibusque aulicis notus, familiaris et socius erat.* Rahere is said to have lived till 1213. He was buried in the north wall of the chancel of his church of St. Bartholomew, where his monument and effigy may still be seen.

Henry of Huntingdon (*Chronicle*, Book VII) preserves a panegyric, written by a certain Walo, on Earl William of Flanders, nephew of King Henry I of England. The occasion of the poem was a battle for the possession of Flanders between William and the German invader, Theodoric. There is no evidence, however, that the poem was written on English soil, or even that the poet had ever been in England.

from Ovid and Lucan, poets abound. Learned clerics amuse themselves with *nugae amatoriae*. Peter of Blois, archdeacon of London and secretary to Queen Eleanor, before he essays his *Opuscula*, dabbles in light verse. Nigel Wireker is writing his satirical poem on the monks. Walter Map, first a clerk of the king's household and afterwards Archdeacon of Oxford and royal ambassador to the Lateran Council at Rome, is satirizing the monks in Latin verse, the while he is amusing himself with satirical pen pictures in prose of life at court. Joseph of Exeter is writing an epic of the Trojan war, and Geoffrey of Vinsauf his *Nova Poetria*.

Meanwhile metrical romances, written in French, of Arthur, of Lancelot, of Tristram, of the Quest of the Grail, flower on every hand. All of this literary activity revolves around and touches the court, the source of appreciation and reward.

The marriage of Henry to Eleanor of Aquitaine connected the English court with a form of minstrelsy peculiarly identified with courtly usage, and prepared the way for the recognition of poetry as an official attribute of the court. Eleanor was the grand-daughter of William IX, Count of Poitiers, the first prominent troubadour, and was herself intimately associated in her youth with the troubadour tradition. When Eleanor came to England she could hardly have lost interest altogether in the *Gaie Science*. Her troubadour lover, Bernard de Ventadour, seems to have visited her.[1] She probably brought other troubadours to the English court, for the latter half of the twelfth century saw a distinct development in England of the two favourite forms of troubadour verse, the *sirventes* or political satires, and the 'debates' between contestants at the Court of Love.[2]

Moreover, one of the chief political problems of Henry's reign

[1] 'The *vers* has been composed fully, so that not a word is wanting, beyond the Norman land and the deep wild sea; and though I am far from my lady, she attracts me like a magnet, the fair one whom may God protect. If the English King and Norman Duke will, I shall see her before the winter surprise us.' Quoted by Chaytor, *The Troubadours*, Camb. 1912, pp. 47–8.

[2] One of these 'debates', *De Phillide et Flora*, written by a twelfth-century Anglo-Norman, is characterized in an Elizabethan translation as 'a sweet poem, containing a civil contention of two amorous ladies (both virgins and princesses) the one devoted in her love to a soldier, the other affecting a scholar, and both to maintain their choice, they contend (as women) to commend and reprove each other's love, by the best and soundest reasons they can allege, whether the scholar or the soldier were the more allowable of his profession in women's minds, and aptest and worthiest to be best accepted in ladies' favours'. See Schofield, *English Literature from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer*, pp. 70–1.

tended to bring the activities of the troubadours into a prominence which could not escape the attention of his subjects on the English side of the channel. Eleanor's countryman, Bertran de Born, count and troubadour, was the chief thorn in Henry's side in Aquitaine. 'I made father and sons rebels to each other. Ahithophel did not more with Absalom and with David by his wicked goadings,' are the words which Dante puts into the mouth of Bertran in the *Inferno*; and in an old Provençal sketch of Bertran it is said: 'He was a good knight and a good warrior and a good servant of ladies and a good troubadour of *sirventes*. . . . And whenever he chose, he was master of King Henry and his sons; but he always wanted them to be at war among themselves, the father and the sons and the brothers one with another; and he always wanted the King of France and King Henry to be at war too. And if they made peace or a truce, he immediately set to work to unmake it with his *sirventes*, and to shew how they were all dishonoured in peace. And he gained much good by it, and much harm.'[1]

With Bertran de Born thus prominent in Henry's political affairs, and with Eleanor's associations, the troubadour influence, tending as it did to dignify the rôle of the court-poet and differentiate him from the wandering minstrel and professional entertainer, could not have failed to make itself felt at the court of Henry II; and with the advent of Richard I, the English court (at least during the king's occasional sojourns there) became a veritable court of troubadours. Richard himself practised the *Gaie Science* and wrote *sirventes*: and around him clustered Arnaut Daniel, Peire Vidal, Folquet of Marseilles, Gaucelm Faidit, and many more troubadours whose names are lost. Ambroise sang at his coronation, and Blondel—but, alas! endeared as he is to all readers of *The Talisman*, Blondel seems not to have played the part at court or in the discovery of his imprisoned master which tradition ascribed to him.[2] To Richard, Warton[3] even assigns an official poet-laureate or 'Royal Poet', a certain *Gulielmus Peregrinus*: but in spite of the unquestioning faith with which subsequent biographers of the laureates have accepted the statement,[4]

[1] Quoted by Kate Norgate, *England under the Angevin Kings*, ii. 205.

[2] See Leo Wiese's introduction to *Die Lieder des Blondel de Nesle*, and Chaytor, *The Troubadours*, p. 134.

[3] *Hist. Eng. Poetry*, iii. 128.

[4] Walter Hamilton, *Poets Laureate of England*, p. 12, and W. Forbes Gray, *Poets Laureate of England*, p. 7. See also *Ency. Brit.*, eleventh ed., Art. 'Poet Laureate'.

there seems to be no real authority for it. Bale [1] and Leyser [2] both mention Gulielmus as having been among the poets accompanying Richard to Palestine, and name an *Odoeporicon Ricardi Regis* as having been written by him, but neither singles him out as possessing any official distinction. Even his designation of 'William the Foreigner' seems to have been misunderstood, for Leland explicitly describes him as *gente Anglus*.[3] Neither at the court of Henry II nor of Richard I can we find a designated 'Royal Poet', though we may, perhaps, grant the function to Ambroise on the strength of his *L'Estoire de la Guerre Sainte*. We can at least perceive that the aristocratic associations of the troubadour traditions are preparing the way for one.

The title of *versificator regis* is usually mentioned indiscriminately along with *ioculator* and *citharista* by historians of English minstrelsy;[4] but it is significant that this title appears for the first time as a part of the king's official household in the reign of Henry III. Henry III's marriage with Eleanor of Provence was a continuation of that connexion with the troubadours established by Henry II's marriage with Eleanor of Aquitaine. The career of the troubadour was, it is true, almost over; but the tradition of the poet honoured at court, the official singer, which the troubadour had played his part in establishing, was not likely to suffer at the hands of the Provençal queen. The *versificator regis* was no mere professional entertainer like the *joculator* and the *citharista*. He was the official poet, the fruition of the troubadour tradition.

Certainly the first holder of the title was no mere professional minstrel. This was Henri d'Avranches, whose book of Latin poems Matthew Paris had among his valued possessions.[5] From this book of verses,[6] the historian quotes brief passages celebrating the king's various achievements, and also a larger poem by the same author (but not included in the Cambridge MS.) on Abbot William of Trumpington.

It is significant of the importance attached to the poetical services of Henri d'Avranches that the king at one time issued a *liberate* ordering the payment of the large sum of ten pounds to *Magistro Henrico, Versificatori*,[7] and on another occasion an order requiring the treasurer to pay to the poet one hundred shillings as the arrears

[1] *Cat. Scrip. Brit.*, p. 242. [2] *Hist. Poet. Med. Aev.*, p. 759.
[3] *Comment.*, p. 227.
[4] By Chambers, for example, *Mediaeval Stage*, i, 49.
[5] Matthew Paris, *Chronica Maiora*, ed. Luard, Lond. 1872–83, iii. 43–4.
[6] Now in the Cambridge University Library, Dd. xi, 78. See Luard's note, iii. 43. [7] Madox, *Hist. and Antiq. of the Exchequer*, p. 674.

of his stipend, and this to be done without delay, even though the treasury is closed.[1]

There is another provision for this *versificator regis* which acquires a special interest through the fact that a life-time grant of wine subsequently became one of the cherished perquisites of the laureates. In the *Calendar of Patent Rolls* for May 20, 1257, there is a 'grant for life to Master Henry de Abrincis, the King's poet, of two tuns of wine of the King's wines, which are in the keeping of the Chamberlain of London, to wit, a tun of vintage and a tun of rack (de recko)'; and also a mandate 'to Thomas Esperun and Matthew Bukerel, Chamberlains of London, so long as they have the chamberlaincy of London, to let him have the said tuns'.[2]

There is even a further link between this first *versificator regis* and the later laureates. When the poet-laureateship was finally established, appointment to the office was the signal for an outburst of ridicule. Jonson and Davenant did not escape it. Eusden and Pye were the butts of anybody's jest. Even Tennyson had his share of ridicule as laureate. It was in strict accord, then, that this forerunner, Henri d'Avranches, should have suffered for his official elevation. The satirist was a certain Michael Blaunpayne, Cornishman by birth,[3] but quite ready to vie in latinity with the *versificator regis*. Michael is not measured in his language. 'We used to call you Arch-Poet,' he says, 'but now we dub you a back-stairs poet, nay rather a mere poetaster; and as for your appearance, you are a perfect blackamoor, with a bull's head, a mule's jaw, and the nose of a puppy.'[4] Perhaps this is Billingsgate rather than satire; but at least such language to an official poet is not confined to the days of Henry III.[5]

[1] '*Qui ei debentur de arreragiis stipendiorum suorum . . . et hoc sine dilatione et difficultate faciatis, licet Scaccarium sit clausum.*'—Madox, p. 268.

[2] *Cal. Patent Rolls*, 1247–58, p. 555.

[3] '*Michael Blaunpayn, Patria Cornubiensis . . . scripsit . . . contra quendam Normannum, Henricum Abrincensem . . . Lib. I. init: "Archipoeta vide quod non sit,"* &c.'—P. Leyser, *Hist. Poet. Med. Aev.*, p. 996.

[4] Warton (*Hist. Eng. Poet.* ii. 48–9 and note) quotes the lines as follows:

Pendo poeta prius te diximus Archipoetam
Quem pro postico nunc dicimus esse poetam,
Imo poeticulum . . .
Est tibi gamba capri, crus passeris, et latus apri;
Os leporis, catuli nasus, dens et gena muli:
Frons vetulae, tauri caput, et color undique mauri.

Should the first line read *Pseudo poeta, prius*, &c.—O Bogus Poet?

[5] The treatment of Davenant, whose rôle was semi-official, is the most flagrant instance. Cf. Suckling's *Session of the Poets*, and more unsparing references by Sir John Mennis, Anthony Wood, Aubrey, and others.

It would be a source of satisfaction if a *versificator regis* could be found in each successive reign during the two centuries which elapse before an official poet-laureate appears in the records. Unfortunately, the documents do not accommodate us; and we are forced to the conclusion that the *versificator regis* of Henry III was but one, just as we shall see in the poet laureate of Henry VII another, of the abortive starts toward the definite establishment of the official laureateship. That the office of *versificator regis* did not become permanent was due to the circumstances of its creation. It was bound up with court minstrelsy and the flourishing of the troubadours; and as the one declined and the other passed, the office of court poet also fell into abeyance.

In the interval of these two centuries, however, the thread of tradition was not wholly broken. It was, in fact, only deflected—from the court to the universities. The *versificator regis* disappears; but the title under which he was in due time to be re-established as a court official begins now to make its way into English usage.

II

BACCALAUREATE AND POET LAUREATE

. . . By all our holl assent
Avaunced by Pallas to laurell preferment.
Skelton, *Garlande of Laurell.*

'In the same manner as the city of Athens shone in former days as the mother of liberal arts and the nurse of philosophers,' says Bartholomaeus Anglicus, 'so in our time Paris has raised the standard of learning and civilization not only in France, but in all the rest of Europe; and, as the mother of wisdom, she welcomes guests from all parts of the world, supplies all their wants, and subjects them to her pacific rule.'[1]

To the cultivated Englishman of the thirteenth century, as to his contemporaries on the Continent, the University of Paris was the intellectual centre and the source of academic tradition. Stephen Langton had left a prebend at York to study there; had, according to an unverified tradition, become a Chancellor of the University of Paris; had won distinction as historian and poet as well as in theology, and had brought the traditions of the university back with him when he returned to take up his troublous career at Canterbury. Alexander Neckam, author of *De Naturis Rerum* and a distinguished teacher at the University of Paris, returned to England in the closing years of the twelfth century and became Abbot of Cirencester in 1213. Many of the English schoolmen of the generations immediately following him studied and taught in Paris. Bishop Grosseteste, author of the *Chasteau d'Amour*, was educated at Paris, and became Chancellor of Oxford. Roger Bacon studied at Paris, where he probably, though not certainly, was graduated doctor, and spent many years of his active and industrious life at Oxford. Duns Scotus, the *doctor subtilis*, left the Professorship of Divinity at Oxford to become a Regent of the University of Paris. In 1229 many scholars migrated from Paris to Oxford as a result of a quarrel between the Provost of Paris and Queen Blanche. The English 'nation' left Paris in a body for

[1] *Bartholomaei Anglici De Proprietatibus Rerum*, Book XV, chap. 57. Cf. Jusserand, *Lit. Hist. of the English People*, vol. 1, p. 169.

Oxford, and many of the foreign masters, at the express invitation of Henry III, followed their example. By 1257, the Oxford deputies, speaking before the king at St. Albans, could refer to the university as *schola secunda ecclesiae*—second only to Paris.

In the University of Paris, the student of the liberal arts (the *trivium*, or grammar, logic, and rhetoric, and the *quadrivium*, or arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy) had the status of a *baccalarius artium*, or bachelor of arts, until the specific degree of master of arts was conferred upon him. It was this latter degree which authorized him to teach. But, apparently in the thirteenth century, it became customary to confirm the preliminary status also by a special ceremonial, or in other words to confer upon the student a preliminary degree of *baccalarius artium*. This degree, if it may be properly so called, was conferred not by the chancellor or faculty, but by the 'nation' to which the student belonged.

From the outset this ceremony seems to have involved some sort of laureation. Etymologically, the association of the *baccalarius artium* with the symbolic crown of laurel is open to question;[1] but the compound could hardly have escaped substituting for its ignominious origin a family-tree more satisfying to the imagination. *Baca*, a berry, and *laurus*, laurel, were compounded in classical Latin; and the resemblance of *baccalarius* to the traditional symbol of poetical fame was too close to be ignored. The degree indeed seems to have been explicitly referred to in the statutes as the *laurea baccalaureus*, and the recipients had crowns of laurel placed upon their heads, and styled themselves 'laureates' in their particular degree.[2]

The dates of establishment (1249, 1263, and 1264 respectively) of the first three Oxford colleges, University, Balliol, and Merton, with customs and methods derived from the parent institution, may therefore reasonably be taken as marking the beginning of this practice in England, and the almost coincidental appearance of the title of 'laureate', in an instance hereafter to be noted, confirms the supposition. The completeness also with which the traditional association of the *baccalarius artium* with the laurel was taken over, is aptly

[1] Possibly to be referred to low Latin *bacca* (*vacca*), a cow, *baccalis*, a grazing-farm, *baccalarius*, a cow-boy or grazier's apprentice, hence any youth in service. The unfledged knight, like the 'yong Squyer' of the *Canterbury Tales*, was a *bacheler*. So also the student who is not yet a master of arts (cf. Oxford Dict., *bachelor* and *baccalaureate*).

[2] See M. l'Abbé du Resnel's *Recherches sur les Poetes Couronnez* (*Histoire de l'Académie, Mémoires de Littérature*, vol. x, pp. 507 ff. (1733). M. l'Abbé quotes *Filesac de Origine Statutorum Facultatis Parisiensis*.

illustrated in John Ayliffe's quaint definition of baccalaureate: 'In laurel, those small *pillulae* we call *bacchae*, which this tree buds forth as flowers. And because there is hope for the flower, this term *Baccha Lauri* is given to young students in hopes they will afterwards merit the laurel crown.' [1]

The academic ceremonial of crowning with the laurel wreath, as it obtained at a later date, is thus described by Anthony Wood; and there is no reason to doubt its applicability also to the earlier period:

'Maurice Byrchensaw, a scholar of Rhetoric, who had spent fourteen years in that and Grammar, supplicated that he might be admitted Bachelaur in that Faculty, but with this condition, that he compose an hundred verses "de Nobilitate Universitatis", and that he should not at any time read to or teach his scholars Ovid "de Arte Amandi" or Pamphilus "de Amore". John Bulman also who had been a scholar of Rhetoric for several years, supplicated that he might be admitted to the reading of any book in the same faculty, and that also if it was granted, that he might be laureated. Which desire of his being brought to pass, his head was (with this condition that he should read the first book of Tully's Offices and the first book of his Epistles publicly and without expectation of reward) very solemnly adorned with laurel by the Chancellor in a Congregation of Regents; at which time the Proctors assisted in that formality, and the Regents after it was done, all saluted and joyed him, in and with his Honour.

'Among several others that proceeded after this way was Robert Whitinton, one of the last, who having been a secular chaplain and a scholar of Rhetoric for fourteen years and an Informer of Boys twelve, supplicated that it might be sufficient for the taking of his degree Etc. *an.* 1512. Which being granted was, after he had composed an 100 verses, crowned with Laurel at the Act following. This Robert Whitinton, that famous Grammarian in the Reign of King Henry VIII, sometime Scholar to John Stanbrige, and a writer of several Grammar Treatises, doth in one intituled "De Octo partibus Orationis," of which book there are several editions, thus stile himself a Laureat: *Roberti Whitintoni Lichfeldiensis Grammatices Magistri, protovatis Angliae in florentissima Oxoniensi Academia Laureati, de octo partibus Orationis.*' [2]

It was, apparently, this purely academic custom of associating the ceremonial coronation with the conferring of a degree in grammar, rhetoric, and poetry,[3] that first gave vogue to the title of laureate.

[1] *Antient and Present State of the University of Oxford*, Lond. 1714, ii. 195.

[2] *History and Antiquities of the University of Oxford*, Anthony Wood, London, 1796, vol. ii, p. 721.

[3] Poetry and rhetoric were, according to Wood (loc. cit.), 'concluded within the compass of those statutes belonging to the Faculty of Grammar,

There is no reason to doubt that the custom dates from the first establishment of the degree; and if, as Wood says, Whittington was 'one of the last', it was discontinued in the early sixteenth century. That the custom of academic coronation was coeval with the establishment of the degree is borne out by the fact that the first appearance of the title roughly coincides with the foundation of the Oxford colleges. Robert Baston, who is described by both Bale [1] and Anthony Wood [2] as a poet laureate of Oxford, flourished in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. His name happens to have been rescued from oblivion because of a tradition that Robert Bruce captured him at the siege of Stirling Castle and made him write a poem on that event. His poem, *De Striveliniensi Obsidione*, has been preserved; [3] and on the strength of the tradition, Warton in his *History of English Poetry*, and the various biographers of the English poets laureate ever since,[4] have described him as 'Poet Laureate to Edward II' and more or less officially attending his royal master in that campaign. There is no reason to believe that he was anything of the sort, or that he accompanied the king in any other capacity than as an ordinary soldier. It is much more probable that after being laureated in the ordinary manner at Oxford he appended the title to his name purely for its academic significance, as other university laureates were to do in the two succeeding centuries.

The academic use of the word served, however, to give it vogue, and it was not long before it became associated in the classical manner with poetical achievement, irrespective of any more precise significance. Thus, with the purely academic laureates (of whom Skelton is the typical example) on the one hand, and such poets as 'my maister, Chaucer . . .

> The noble Rhetore, poet of Britaine,
> That worthy was the laurel to have
> Of poetry and the palm attaine,'

on the other, the way was opened for those fantastic lists of early

because that those that took their degrees in Rhetoric or Poetry did for the most part join Grammar with them.'

[1] *Laureatus apud Oxonienses*, Bale, Cent. iv, cap. 92.

[2] ''Tis said that one Robert Baston, a Carmelite, was a Laureat Poet of Oxford in the reign of Edward I.'—Wood, *Hist. and Antiq. of the Univ. of Oxford*, ii. 721.

[3] At the British Museum, Cotton MSS. Titus, A xx.

[4] Not excepting the latest. See W. Forbes Gray, *Poets Laureate of England*, Lond. 1914, p. 8 and index.

'official' poets laureate, concerning whom later historians of literature taxed their imaginations.

The most typical and interesting example of this confusion is the tradition that the Father of English poetry himself was the first poet laureate. The basis for the tradition is to be found partly in the actual, though not in any sense official, connexion of Chaucer's poetry with the court, and in the importance of his various official positions; partly in the association of his name with Petrarch's,[1] and partly, as has already been suggested, in the growing use of the word as a term of general compliment to poets.

As to the first of these, the annuity of twenty marks which Chaucer received from Edward III, the supplementary grant of a daily pitcher of wine, and the confirmation of these grants at the hands of Richard II, have contributed something to the tradition, in spite of the fact that as an 'Esquire of the Household' Chaucer was definitely earning whatever remuneration he received. Even the grant of wine[2] was a common form of remuneration in Chaucer's day. Other esquires of Edward III's household received similar grants—'two tuns of wine' to one esquire, 'one *dolium* or two pipes of Gascon wine' to another, 'two *dolia*' to a third.[3] Chaucer's later services as a trusted emissary of Richard II, and as Controller of the Customs, contributed to the impression that the conspicuousness of his position at court must have been in some way bound up with an official rôle as poet; and this, in turn, was supplemented by the direct relation of many of his poems to court life.

The Book of the Duchesse was inspired by the death of Blanche, the wife of John of Gaunt; and the story of Peter, King of Spain, in *The Monk's Tale*, *The Compleynt of Mars*, and *The Compleynt of Venus* are also connected with this patron. *Lak of Stedfastnesse* and *The Compleint to his Empty Purse* are addressed directly to Richard II. *The Parlement of Foules* and *The Legende of Good Women*[4] appear to have been

[1] For example, Leland's tribute, *Comment. de Scrip. Brit.* 1709, p. 422:

Praedicat Aligerum merito Florentia Dantem,
Italia et numeros tota, Petrarche, tuos:
Anglia Chaucerum veneratur nostra poetam,
Cui veneres debet patria lingua suas.

[2] Mr. Lounsbury (*Studies in Chaucer*, i. 174) thinks that the tradition arose from this grant of wine. This seems an inadequate explanation.

[3] See the full discussion of this matter in J. R. Hulbert's *Chaucer's Official Life*, Chicago, 1912, pp. 21–2.

[4] The Prologue of *The Legend of Good Women* is perhaps the most specific instance of a 'court' poem. The theory advanced by ten Brink in 1870, that in the person of Alceste, Chaucer intended a comprehensive

written either for direct presentation to the king or queen, or with the thought that they would read them.

Meanwhile Chaucer had been to Italy. Whether or not he actually saw Petrarch and heard from his lips the tale of the Clerk of Oxford, he could not have failed to hear of Petrarch's coronation. Chaucer's reference to that

> Clerk whos rethorike sweete
> Enlumyned al Ytaille of poetrie,

as 'the lauriat poete' was therefore not a mere accidental phrase of compliment; and Lydgate's tribute to Chaucer, with its unmistakable echo of the foregoing passage, and its reference to the palm branch as well as the laurel crown, shows that the fifteenth-century poet had the classical details of the ceremony of laureation distinctly in mind.

> And eke my maister Chaucer now is grave,[1]
> The noble Rhetore, poet of Britaine,
> That worthy was the laurel to have
> Of poetry and the palme attaine,
> That made first to distill and raine
> The gold dew drops of speech and eloquence
> Into our tongue through his excellence,
> And found the floures first of Rethoricke
> Our rude speech only to enlumine.

Lydgate meant no more than that Chaucer would have been worthy of such a ceremonial coronation; but from desert to possession is but a step; and James I's reference to 'Gowere and Chaucer . . . superlative as poetis laureate' helped to fix the idea. Thynne's and Speght's editions of Chaucer, and especially the cluster of tributes which Speght cited in the 1598 and 1602 editions, focussed the matter, and by 1611, John Speed could refer in his *Historie of Britaine* to 'Chaucer, our Laureate Poet' and to 'Chaucer, Poet Laureate'.

Such was the basis for the tradition, and when in 1668, the laureateship was officially established in England through the appointment of Dryden, Chaucer was named in the official document of appointment

allegory of Queen Anne, was refuted by Mr. J. L. Lowes, in *The Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* (xix. 593 ff.). But that Chaucer in displaying Alceste as a model of wifely virtues, intended a graceful compliment to Queen Anne, seems probable; and Chaucer puts into the mouth of the Queen of Love a perfectly explicit suggestion that the poem be presented to Queen Anne.

> And whan this book is maad, give hit the quene
> On my behalfe, at Eltham, or at Shene.

[1] *i.e.* 'buried'.

as one of Dryden's predecessors in office. Dryden himself calls Chaucer 'laureate to three kings'. In 1675 Edward Phillips, in the *Theatrum Poetarum*, describes him as an official poet laureate. In the eighteenth century this tradition found ready acceptance. It was a contemporary of Queen Anne's laureate, Nahum Tate, who thus displayed a knowledge of literary history equal to his critical acumen :

> The British laurel by old Chaucer worn,
> Still fresh and gay did Dryden's brow adorn ;
> And that its lustre may not fade on thine,
> Wit, fancy, judgement, Tate, in thee combine.[1]

Articles in the *Gentleman's Magazine* and elsewhere, inspired by the occasional renewal of interest in the laureateship when new laureates were appointed, invariably name Chaucer as the first official laureate. As careful a student of literary history as Warton seems to include him in the official list in one of his own laureate-odes. The nineteenth-century biographer of the poets-laureate, Walter Hamilton (1879), declares that though Chaucer was not officially appointed laureate, 'it is certain he used the title until his death, when Gower assumed it.' Even in Ockerby's edition of Haydn's *Book of Dignities* (1890), Chaucer is given without query as the first of the 'Official Laureates'.

Gower's own account of the origin of his *Confessio Amantis* records the royal patronage to the poem ;[2] but there is no basis for the tradition that he was laureate ; nor is there any reason for attempting to follow this minor parallel of the Chaucerian story. It is sufficient to note that the ancient authorities occasionally venture to be quite explicit

[1] Poems prefatory to Tate's *Panacea : A Poem upon Tea*, London, 1700.

[2] In Temse when it was flowende,
As I be bote cam rowende, . . .
My liege lord par chaunse I mette ;
And so befel, as I cam nyh,
Out of my bot, whan he me syh,
He bad me come in to his barge,
And whan I was with him at large,
Amonges othre thinges seid
He hath this charge upon me leid,
And bad me doo my besynesse
That to his hihe worthinesse
Som newe thing I scholde boke
That he himself it mihte loke
After the forme of my writynge
And thus upon his comandynge
Myn herte is wel the more glad
To write so as he me bad.

on the point,[1] and that Dryden's patent includes Gower among his predecessors in office.

Chaucer's reverent disciple, 'Lydgate Laureat', also figures occasionally in the tradition. He was more of a court poet than Gower seems to have been, and indeed deserves the title of laureate to Henry V and Henry VI much more definitely than Chaucer does to his 'three kings'. Chaucer, *valettus*, emissary of the court, business-man whose pen 'moves over bills of lading', wrote in intervals of leisure for the love of it. Lydgate came as near to being a professional poet, with a court commission, as it was possible to come in those times. He had his pension, and he was, according to Stowe, engaged to compose verses for the pageant in honour of the entry of Queen Margaret into London in 1445. But he is found in the traditional official list less frequently than Gower. The explanation is simple; his work was more thoroughly forgotten.

It has already been observed that the title of laureate was largely of academic origin. Chaucer and Gower were given it by tradition on other grounds, though early biographers of the former sought to associate him with one or both of the universities; but the laureates whom tradition has preserved for us from the ensuing century had no such claim upon the imagination of posterity, and for them we are thrown back upon the academic explanation. Of one of these, John Kay or Johan Kaye, Warton asserts that he 'was appointed laureate by Edward IV',[2] and adds that Kay 'is said to have been invested (with this office) by the king on his return from Italy'. Warton does not give his authority, but that authority was undoubtedly Tanner, who says in his *Bibliotheca Britannico-Hibernica* (p. 144): *Caius* (Johannes) *sive Kay senior, ex Italia in patriam reversus, poeta laureatus a rege Edwardo IV renunciatus est.* But there is absolutely no evidence of such an appointment preserved in the official records of Edward's reign, and Tanner, writing nearly three centuries after the event, quotes no authority. He seems to have based his statement on *The Dylectable Newesse and Tythynges of the Gloryous Victory of the Rhodjans agaynst the Turkes* (*c.* 1490 ?), translated by Johan Kaye from the Latin history of the siege of Rhodes by Gulielmus Caorsinus, and beginning as follows: 'To the moste excellente moste redoubted and moste crysten kyng: Kyng Edward the fourth Iohan kay hys humble poete lawreate and moste lowly seruant: knelyng vnto the ground

[1] e. g. Polycarp Leyser, *Hist. Poet. Med. Aev.*, p. 1054: *Goverus . . . fuit Poeta Laureatus.*

[2] *Hist Eng. Poetry*, iii. 125.

sayth salute.'[1] This prose translation is all that is left of John Kay, Edward's 'humble poete laureate'. It seems most probable that Kay was nothing more than an academic laureate of Oxford, who, like any other of his fellow academic laureates, felt at liberty thus to designate himself in an address to the king.

The most important of the academic laureates is John Skelton. His fourth poem, *Against Garnesche*, describes his Oxford laureation.

> A kyng to me myn habyte gave:
> At Oxforth, the universyte,
> Avaunsid I was to that degre;
> By hole consent of theyr senate,
> I was made poete lawreate.

In 1493, he was admitted to the degree *ad eundem* at Cambridge: *An. Dom. 1493, et Hen. 7 nono Conceditur Johni Skelton Poete in partibus transmarinis atque Oxon. Laurea ornato, ut apud nos eadem decoraretur.*'[2]

In the seventeenth century he was supposed to have held the royal office. Edward Phillips, in his *Theatrum Poetarum* (1675), says that he was 'accounted a notable Poet, as Poetry went in those daies, namely King *Edward* the fourth's Reign, when doubtless good Poets were scarce; for however he had the good fortune to be chosen Poet Laureate'; and William Winstanley, who knew that he lived in the reign of Henry VIII, speaks of him in his *Lives of the most famous English Poets* (1687) as 'the Poet Laureate in his Age'. L'Abbé du Resnel, in the *Recherches sur les Poetes Couronnez*, goes so far as to declare that Skelton received a patent appointing him poet laureate to Henry VIII, citing in a marginal note '*M. Carte, autrement M. Phillips*' as his authority. There is absolutely no record of such a patent. No one in Skelton's own day or in the generation immediately following appears to have thought of his laureation as other than purely academic. Churchyard, in a poem prefixed to the 1568 edition of Skelton's works, makes the connexion clear.

> Nay, Skelton wore the lawrell wreath,
> And past in schools, ye knoe.

Such as his title was, he made full use of it. He flaunted it alike in the titles and in the theme of his poems.

[1] E. Gordon Duff, *Fifteenth-Century English Books*, 1917, p. 21.

[2] Skelton, ed. Dyce, I. xiii. Dyce explains 'partibus transmarinis' as referring to the University of Louvain, on the strength of a poem from the '*Opusculum Roberti Whitintoni*,' &c. The poem is entitled *In clarissimi Scheltonis Lovaniensis Poetae Laudes Epigramma.* The records of Louvain, searched at Dyce's request, do not mention Skelton.

It is in *The Garlande of Laurell* (1523) that Skelton reaches the climax of his vaunting. For some features of this poem Skelton may have been indebted to Stephen Hawes's allegory, *The Pastime of Pleasure*, in which Grande Amour is led by Fame to the tower or castle of Doctrine, and, inspired by Gower, Chaucer, and Lydgate, decides to study under laurel-crowned Rhetoric. But Skelton evidently had the details of his own academic laureation in mind, in describing his coronation in the celestial hall of fame.

In this '*Delectable Tratyse upon a Goodly Garlande or Chaplet of Laurell*, by Mayster Skelton, Poete Laureat', the poet, in the conventional dream, finds himself in the presence of Dame Pallas and the Queen of Fame. He is urged to give an account of his own writings. At first, surprisingly enough, he is 'wonder slake': but Dame Pallas, for his encouragement, summons

> What poetis we have at our retenewe,
> To see if Skelton wyll put himself in prease
> Among the thickeste of all the hole rowte.

Hereupon gathers a crowd

> Of poetis laureat of many dyverse nacyons,

a miscellaneous collection of classical authors, and a few of more recent times, including Petrarch and Boccaccio. Finally, Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate appear

> Togeder in armes, as brethern, enbrasid;
> There apparell farre passynge beyonde that I can tell;
> With diamauntis and rubis there tabers were trasid,
> None so ryche stones in Turkey to sell;
> Thei wanted nothynge but the laurell.

What laurel does Skelton mean that they lacked? Were they, the only English poets whom Skelton mentions, not yet enjoying that assured position in the hall of fame accorded by common assent to the 'dyverse poetis' of Greece and Italy? Or does it occur to him, when he comes to Gower, Chaucer, and Lydgate, that they had not been formally decorated with the academic laurel of which he was so proud? At any rate, the words in which the three poets announce to Skelton the honour which is to be conferred upon him suggest the academic ceremonial. Says 'Mayster Gower':

> Brother Skelton, your endevorment
> So have ye done, that meretoryously
> Ye have deservyed to have an enplement
> In our collage above the sterry sky.

Skelton modestly replies that this honour should rather belong to them, but Mayster Chaucer takes up the tale:

> Counterwayng your besy delygence
> Of that we beganne in the supplement,
> Enforcid ar we you to recompence,
> Of all our hool collage by the agreament,
> That we shall brynge you personally present
> Of noble Fame before the Quenes grace,
> In whose court poynted is your place.

To which Mayster Lydgate adds:

> So am I preventid of my brethern tweyne
> In rendrynge to you thankkis meritory,
> That welny nothynge there doth remayne
> Wherewith to give you my regraciatory,
> But that I poynt you to be prothonatory
> O Fame's court, by all our holl assent[1]
> Avaunced by Pallas to laurell preferment.

Hereupon, 'theis noble poetis thre' escort him to Fame's court and turn him over to 'Occupacyoun', who gives him a glimpse of the activities of various nations, and finally opens to him the gate of 'Anglia'. Within he finds a mad company of 'dysers, carders, tumblars with gambawdis, brainless blenkards, fals forgers, Pope-holy ypocrytis'—a typically Skeltonian riot. Through these the poet and his escort find their way to a fair garden.

> Where I saw growyng a goodly laurell tre,
> Enverdurid with levis contynually grene.

In a goodly chamber opening upon the garden they find an assembly of fair ladies surrounding the 'noble Cowntess of Surrey'. As Skelton has been the special champion of the sex:

> For of all ladyes he hath the library,
> Ther names recountying in the court of Fame;
> Of all gentylwomen he hath the scruteny,
> In Fames Court reportynge the same—

it falls to them to weave his laurel crown. While they are at work upon it, he pays them tribute in a series of little lyrics—the merriest, maddest, most tripping little lyrics that ever fell from his erratic pen. When their work is done, he sets the wreath upon his head, and

> Forthwith upon this, as it were in a thought,
> Gower, Chawcer and Lydgate, theis thre,

[1] Note the resemblance of this phrase to that used by Skelton in describing his laureation at Oxford.

Before remembred, me curteisly brought
Into that place where as they left me,
Where all the sayd poetis sat in there degre,
But when they sawe my lawrell rychely wrought,
All other besyde were counterfete, they thought.

Even the Queen of Fame herself grows a little jealous, and, says the poet,

Gave on me a glum.

Rather haughtily she asks 'how ye have deserved' such a 'laureat triumphe?' 'Occupacyoun' then unclasps the 'boke of remembrance' and 'redith and expoundyth sum parte of Skelton's bokes and baladis with ditis of plesure, in as moche as it were to longe a proces to reherse all by name that he hath compyled'. Even so, the list, in its 'ragged and jagged' rhymes, covers many pages, and when at last *Occupacyoun* reaches 'the laurell',

All orators and poetis, with other grete and smale
A thowsande thowsande, I trow, to my dome,
Triumpha, *triumpha*! they cryid all aboute;
Of trumpettis and clariouns the noyse went to Rome.
The starry hevyn, me thought, shoke with the showte;
The grownde gronid and tremblid, the noyse was so stowte;
The Queen of Fame commaundid shett fast the boke;
And therwith sodenly out of my dreme I woke.

So ends this extraordinary poem. With all his antics, Skelton seems to have meant his elevation seriously enough. Doubtless the academic title seemed to him a mere foreshadowing of the laurel which he expected from posterity; but the blending of the terminology of the one with the symbolism of the other makes the poem a sort of focus of the early laureate tradition.

After Skelton's day, the formal practice of university laureation appears to have fallen into disuse. But though it was not continued as an official ceremonial, the tradition has been intermittently renewed at Oxford, since that time, through the election by the students of a college of one of their number as poet laureate. In one instance of this, at a much later period, the choice of the common-room anticipated the choice of the court, for it is recorded that the students of Trinity elected Thomas Warton laureate of their college, and crowned him with laurel in the common-room, after which the young laureate duly recited an ode in honour of their lady patroness.[1]

[1] See Mant's preface to the 1802 edition of Warton's *Poems*, p. xxiii.

III

BERNARD ANDREAS, POET LAUREATE

'*Etsi oculis captus . . . poetico furore afflatus.*'—Bernard Andreas.

Among these poets laureate whose title was academic in origin, one and, apparently, only one was officially recognized at court by that title, enjoyed a regular pension from the crown, and composed annual odes and 'presentations' to his royal master. The completeness with which this late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century poet anticipated the rôle of the later official laureates, gives him an importance in this history which his literary merit hardly deserves; but even this perhaps is consistent with the traditions of an office that has more frequently magnified its holders than been magnified by them.

Bernardus Andreas *Tholosatis* (i. e. of Toulouse) was a blind Augustinian friar who appears for the first time in the train of Henry VII on the occasion of the king's triumphal entry into London after the battle of Bosworth Field.[1] This event the blind poet promptly celebrated in a *Carmen Sapphicum de Prima Regis Victoria.* Of the nine stanzas, full of conventional phrases in the classical manner, one will suffice:

Musa, praeclaros age dic triumphos,
Regis Henrici decus ac trophaeum
Septimi, lentis fidibus canora,
Dic age, Clio.

There is no effort in the poem to depict the pageantry of the entry, and indeed nothing noteworthy except that a blind man should have written it; nor indeed is Bernard loath to make capital of this fact. *Ad cuius adventum,* he writes, *ego, etsi oculis captus . . . laetusque poetico furore afflatus palam hoc carmen cecini.*

A short time after this, on November 21, 1486, the king, by bill under his sign manual, directed the Bishop of Exeter, Keeper of the Privy Seal, to issue letters patent, granting an annuity of ten

[1] Bernard Andreas declares in his *Life of Henry VII* (*Memorials of King Henry VII*, ed. Gairdner, Lond. 1858, p. 19) that he was not in England during the Wars of the Roses. If Bale's statement that Andreas was nearly sixty in 1510 is correct, he must have been about thirty at Henry's accession.

marks to 'Bernard Andreas, *Poet Laureate*'.[1] The letters patent have disappeared, but that they were actually issued three days later is shown by a warrant of November 28, which refers to the letters patent of the twenty-fourth of the same month, and instructs the Treasurer and Chamberlains to pay to Bernard Andreas, *Poet Laureate*, the arrears of his salary from the preceding Easter.[2]

These two documents are the earliest on record in which a royal annuity is granted to a poet laureate, and in fact the earliest official reference to such a functionary. It does not seem probable, however, that there was any formal appointment of Bernard Andreas as poet laureate. The title, as in other instances already noted, was apparently of academic origin. Andreas had been or was at the time teaching at Oxford. The annuity was granted *consideratione virtutis, scientiae incrementique, quod non nullis per doctrinam Bernardi Andreae, Poetae Laureati, tam in universitate nostra Oxoniensi quam in aliis locis non paucis multipliciter profuerit.* Among the 'other places' may have been the University of Toulouse. In any event the title seems to have been merely appropriated in the official document, not conferred by it.

But the point of actual importance is that the laureate thus designated in the official record remained for many years—even well into the reign of Henry VIII—the recognized court poet. According to Bale, who in his youth might have known Andreas in his old age,[3] he was formally appointed king's poet.[4] A few years later he received the additional appointment of historiographer royal, anticipating the combination of offices which the first formally appointed poet laureate, John Dryden, was to hold. As historiographer Andreas produced, about the year 1502, a history of the king's reign from the beginning to the events of the year just named. The title-page reads: *Bernardi Andreae Tholosatis Poetae Laureati, Regii Historiographi De Vita Atque Gestis Henrici Septimi Angliae ac Franciae Regum Potentissimi Sapientissimique Historia.*[5]

[1] Rymer's MSS. (*MS. Addit.* 4617). [2] *Foedera*, xii. 317.

[3] Bale was about thirty years of age at the date of Andreas's death.

[4] *Ab ea* (sc. *Tolosa*) *decedens Bernardus videndarum terrarum gratia, in Angliam Londinum usque pervenit. Hinc est ab Henrico octauo illustrissimo Anglorum rege in aulam accitus, ac regii poetae nomine statim insignitus* (*Script. Illustr. Mai. Brit.* part ii, p. 139).

[5] The *Historia*, the various brief annals which Andreas wrote in successive years under Henry VII and Henry VIII, and several French poems almost certainly by him, are to be found in the *State Papers* (*Memorials of King Henry VII*, ed. James Gairdner, Lond. 1858).

In this work, Andreas incorporates a series of poems, beginning with the *Carmen Sapphicum* already referred to, and celebrating in spirited panegyric practically every victory or other event of importance in Henry's reign, to the year 1502. Among these are an ode to Henry's Queen, Elizabeth; verses on the birth of Prince Arthur, in which Andreas echoes the general wish that the peaceful union of York and Lancaster should be assured by that event; verses on the occasion of the creation of Arthur Prince of Wales; a poem on the murder of the Earl of Northumberland; a celebration of the king's victory over the Yorkist conspirators in 1487; and another on the king's successes in France in 1492.

A passage from Bernard's ode of 1487 will afford a fair sample of his extravagant laudation of his royal master:

Henrici cano Septimi triumphos
Divi principis; ille cura Phoebo
Solus; namque meos amat benigne
Princeps versiculos colitque musas,
Princeps belligeris decorus armis,
Princeps vincere nec ferire laetus,
Princeps aequoreum regens tridentem,
Princeps cura sui tremorque regni,
Princeps Martigenae decus Quirini,
Princeps Cecropia nitens oliva,
Princeps, Croese, tuas opes repellens,
Princeps Mercurii nepos superni,
Princeps ingenio nitente praestans,
Fama, religione, comitate,
Sensu, sanguine, gratia, decore.

Thomas Warton, who refers to the prose works of Bernard Andreas, but seems to have forgotten that they were the repository for many of his laureate performances, names as 'all the pieces now to be found, which he wrote in the character of poet laureate,' *An Address to Henry the Eighth for the most auspicious beginning of the tenth year of his reign*, with an *Epithalamium on the marriage of Francis the Dauphin of France with the King's daughter*, a *New Year's Gift* for the year 1515, and verses wishing prosperity to his majesty's thirteenth year. These are said to have been once in the possession of Thomas Martin of Palgrave, the antiquary,[1] but are not now extant.[2]

In addition to these (which are not included in Gairdner's *Memorials*), the *Calendar of Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII*,[3]

[1] Warton, *Hist. Eng. Poet.* iii. 128 *n.*
[2] Gairdner, *Memorials*, p. xiii.
[3] Vol. i, p. 668.

mentions an '*Invocatio de inclyta invictissimi Regis nostri Henrici VIII. in Gallos et Scotos victoria, per Bernardum Andrée, poetam regium.*'

To these must be added several French poems, the authenticity of which Gairdner establishes. By far the most interesting of these is *Les Douze Triomphes de Henry VII.* This poem is an allegorical rhymed version of the *Historia*, ending at about the same point of Henry's career and probably composed about the same time. It is an extraordinary composition, in which the twelve feats of Hercules are compared, with considerable ingenuity, to Henry's triumphs. Henry is Hercules; Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy, is Juno (the same comparison, by the way, is made in Bernard's *Historia*); the lion, whom the poet is unwilling to name,[1] is apparently Charles VIII of France; the seven-headed hydra is the warring factions of England; the great boar is King Richard,—

Or avoit il retins pour sa devise
Le grant pourceau qui est trèsorde beste;—

the stag with the golden horns is the Earl of Lincoln; the Queen of the Amazons is the Dowager of Flanders and Burgundy;[2] the harpies are the brigands who were pillaging England until Henry suppressed them; the bull is James IV of Scotland; the three-headed King Geryon is a combination of Henry's chief enemies, the King of the Romans, the Archduke, and (again!) the Duchess of Burgundy; the robber, Cacus, who spouted fire out of his mouth, is Perkin Warbeck; the three heads of Cerberus are Perkin's three captains; and finally, the garden of the Hesperides is France with its *fleurs de lis*, into which, after expelling the dragon Maximilien, Henry has triumphantly entered. So ends *Les Douze Triomphes*, surely as portentous a literary exercise as ever panegyrist achieved.[3]

In addition to these laureate poems, Bernard's appointment as historiographer royal spurred him into activity as an annalist. In the dedication of the *Historia* he declares that it is his intention to discharge his obligation to his royal master by producing a yearly record of the reign. This plan he seems to have carried out with a fair measure of

[1] *Et de ce roy je me taiz le nommer,*
Qui du leon est icy figuré.

[2] The fact that the Duchess of Burgundy has already done service as Juno does not worry Bernard; in fact, at a later stage of the poem she appears again as one of the heads of King Geryon.

[3] A later, and in this case, 'official' laureate, was to develop the same analogy—though less elaborately—in a tribute to his royal master. See Dryden's *Threnodia Augustalis*, sec. xvi.

regularity. At least four of these have been preserved, and two, the annals for 1504 and 1507, are reprinted in the *Memorials*. Two others, for the year 1515 and 1521 of the reign of Henry VIII, indicate that the historiographer royal continued his activities under that monarch.

Meanwhile the pension of 1486, though it was originally granted until such time as Andreas could be given ecclesiastical preferment,[1] seems to have been continued at least beyond 1496. A grant of that year has been preserved,[2] permitting him to be paid a lump sum instead of in quarterly instalments. Moreover, the Calendars of the reigns of both Henry VII and Henry VIII record a series of New Year's gifts to our poet, which seasonably coincide with the annual 'presentations' of annals and poems.[3] It is true that during a part of this time he was acting as tutor to Prince Arthur, and these grants might be interpreted as payments for that service, but they are specified among the royal 'gifts', and the recipient is generally described as Andreas or André, 'the poet', or 'the blind poet'. His function as court poet seems never to have been lost sight of by the court. It is noteworthy that this recognition was accorded him by Henry VIII as well as by Henry VII. As late as 1521 there is a New Year's gift to 'Master Bernard, the blind poet', and the 'presentation' of this year confirms the theory that he was, or felt himself to be, under some sort of official obligation to continue his poetical efforts.

What can the poet in his old age (*aetate ista decrepita*), he exclaims, do for his Royal Master, except to renew after his feeble fashion the poetical tributes (*Musarum corollas et thymiamata*) which he has offered in the past? Time was (that is, in his early days under Henry VII) when as a young poet he addressed those older than himself: but now he has grown old (*imo vetustissimorum extremis*). The King whom now he serves is young, and yet what can the poet do but utter sorrowful measures (*moestos modos*), instead of those cheerful strains which are appropriate for the ancient and most devoted usage of his office (*pro antiquo et deditissimo*[4] *officii mei*).[5]

[1] Andreas was given the benefice of Higham in 1501, but held it for only a short time. He seems to have remained identified with the court until the end of his life.

[2] *Foedera*, xii. 693.

[3] See for the reign of Henry VII, Bentley's *Excerpta Historica*, pp. 86, 109, and 124; for the reign of Henry VIII, *Cal. Letters and Papers, Dom.*, vol. ii, part ii, pp. 1444, 1449, 1454, and vol. iii, part 2, p. 1533.

[4] The necessary noun was evidently omitted by the scribe.

[5] The entire passage (the latinity of which has suffered severely, either from Bernard's decrepitude or the inadequacy of the scribe) is to be

It would appear from the foregoing passage that Bernard Andreas felt, to the end of his career, the desire to fulfil his obligations as court poet. When death relieved him of his burdens it is impossible to ascertain, but there is a letter of Erasmus,[1] written in 1530, blaming Bernard for having formerly prejudiced Henry VII against Linacre, and referring to him as a '*caecus adulator, nec adulator tantum, sed et delator pessimus*',[2] the tenor of which suggests that Bernard was still alive at that date.

Despite Erasmus's unfavourable opinion, Bernard Andreas was not without honour in his adopted country. Many passages in his 'Presentations', and his tutorship to Prince Arthur, bear witness to the intimacy of his relations with Henry VII. That he enjoyed similar favour under Henry VIII is made evident, again, by Bernard's personal references, by the numerous gifts which he received from the king, and by the tradition, for which Crusenius is responsible, that Bernard was the actual author of Henry's famous diatribe against Martin Luther.[3] Like many of the later laureates, Bernard was not a great poet, but he was at least better than most of his contemporaries.[4] His virtues and his defects are well summed up in the quaint language of John Speed:

'This Andreas . . . having as well the title of Poet Laureat as of King's Historiographer (how hardlie soever those two faculties meet with honour in the same person) meant to have historized and poetized the Acts of this King, but (for want of competent and attended instructions in many places of chief importance) left his labour full of wide breaches, and unfinished; yet in such points as he hath professed to know, not unworthy to bee vouched; for there is in him a great deale of cleare elocution, and defaecated conceit above the ordinary of that age.'[5]

found in Gairdner, p. xiii. The foregoing is a paraphrase rather than a translation.

[1] Lib. 26, Ep. 14.

[2] Erasmus had no love for Bernard. In a letter of September 1524 (summarized *Cal. State Papers, Dom.*, 1524–6, p. 279), Erasmus characterizes him as 'the blind guide, formerly a tutor of mean abilities to Prince Arthur'; but Erasmus's prejudice may be accounted for by the fact that he had at one time owed Bernard a comparatively large sum of money and had hesitated to come to London for fear of being dunned (v. Erasmus, *Epistolae*, ed. Allen, Epp. 248 and 254 and note, tom. i, p. 487).

[3] '*P. Bernardus Andreas Tolosanus hac aetate in Angliam descendebat, ibique Regi Henrico author fuit, vt Defensorium contra Lutheranos errores scriberet.*'—Crusenius, *Monasticon Augustinianum*, p. 192. Erasmus insists that King Henry himself composed the answer to Luther. Cf. Froude's *Erasmus*, p. 313 and p. 367.

[4] '*Arte vero poetica inter coaevos praesertim excelluit.*'—Tanner, *Bibl. Brit.*, p. 41.

[5] *Historie of Britaine*, London, 1611, p. 728.

Whether we should be justified in styling Bernard Andreas the first official poet laureate, and should hold that the title which was afterwards popularly accorded to Jonson and Davenant and officially granted to John Dryden had merely lapsed since Bernard held it, is perhaps open to question. In the two documents in which the title occurs, it was apparently, as has already been pointed out, academic in its origin. Later official references name him court poet, but do not call him poet laureate. It is not unlikely that Bernard himself liked the title of laureate, and was responsible for its incorporation in the two official grants, for Bernard, it must be remembered, was a native of Toulouse, and the period of his early manhood in that city was the period of the revival of its famous floral games [1] (themselves an inheritance of the troubadour tradition), in which many poets competed and held it an honour to be laureated, or crowned with a floral chaplet. The title may have been thus doubly endeared to him—by academic usage and by his native tradition. As the official title of the court poet it was destined to lapse after this auspicious beginning in 1486. But the possibility that its adoption in the official documents of that year was something more than an accident, and that the poet himself may have been responsible for it, is at least a pleasant subject for speculation. At any rate, be it accident or intention, the titular honour is Bernard's, and through him the title of poet laureate gained its first foothold in the official documents.

Moreover, whether we feel ourselves justified in calling Bernard Andreas the first official poet laureate or not, we find in him the best instance on record of the old court poet out of whose rôle sprang the later official laureateship. What that rôle was and how closely it resembled that of the later laureates, may be made clear by a comparison of Bernard's career with Skelton's. Dyce hazards 1460 as the date of Skelton's birth, and gives 1529 as the date of his death. If Bernard was, as has been suggested, about thirty years of age in 1486, and was nearing his end (as the 'presentation' of that year indicates) in 1521, the lives of the two men are practically coterminous. Barring Skelton's brief and unimportant lines on the death of King

[1] *Les jeux floraux* seem to have been established in Toulouse about 1324, and revived in the latter part of the fifteenth century by Clemence Isaure, Countess of Toulouse. Degrees of *Bachelier* and *Docteur de la Gaie Science* were granted to the competitors in the poetical contests and the winners were 'laureated' with a crown or chaplet of natural or silver flowers or leaves.

Edward IV, the earliest instance of his poetical activities is the *Elegy* on the death of the Earl of Northumberland in 1489. One of the earliest Latin poems which we have from the pen of Bernard Andreas is on the same subject. Skelton's university laureation occurred only two or three years after the date of the patent in which Andreas is officially recognized as poet laureate. Skelton took holy orders in 1498. Andreas was an Augustinian friar. Skelton celebrated the creation of Arthur Prince of Wales.[1] Andreas wrote a panegyric on the same subject. Andreas was tutor to Prince Arthur. Skelton was tutor to Prince Henry, afterwards Henry VIII.

These coincidences serve, however, only to emphasize the contrast between the two. The tradition of the *Versificator Regis*, which may be said to have reached its transition stage to the laureateship in the person of Bernard Andreas, was, as Warton has pointed out, essentially a Latin, not an English tradition. The vernacular, even though a century had passed since Chaucer had glorified it, had still to justify its claim to be a dignified literary medium. At just that period Skelton was adjuring his 'litill quaire' (*The Garlande of Laurell*):

Take no dispare
Though I you wrate
After this rate
In Englyshe letter;
So moche the better
Welcome shall ye
To sum men be;
For Latin warkis
Be good for clerkis;
Yet now and then
Sum Latin men
May happely loke
Upon your boke,
And so procede
In you to rede,
That so indede
Your fame may sprede.

Caxton, at this period, and Ascham half a century later, were disturbed by the inconsistencies of the vernacular, while defending its use. In these circumstances, Bernard's poetry, though comparatively insignificant as literature, was, according to the standards of the time, the official kind of poetry, formed on classical models, and written in the dignified language of learning.

[1] *Prince Arturis Creacyoun*. The poem has not been preserved (cf. Dyce, I. xxi).

Skelton could have written in Latin if he had chosen. Like his own Parrot, Skelton's 'Lady Maystress, Dame Philology' had given him 'a gyfte . . . to lerne all language, and it to speke aptely'. He wrote a few Latin poems; he occasionally interpolated bits of Latin verse of his own composition, but in the main he elected to write in English, and, in subject matter, to worship at the shrine of Juvenal. The court poet has never been the critic of the court. The author of *Colyn Cloute* and *Why Come Ye not to Court* might flaunt his academic title as he would, but he could never have had official recognition as court poet. The contrast between the dignified but uninspired work of Bernard Andreas and Skelton's mad mixture of genius and knavery serves to fix at the very outset of the laureate tradition the standards of respectable conservatism by which the appointments were later to be determined.

IV

SPENSER, DRAYTON, AND DANIEL AS TRADITIONAL POETS LAUREATE

> That wreath which in Eliza's golden days
> My master dear, divinest Spenser, wore,
> That which rewarded Drayton's learned lays,
> Which thoughtful Ben and gentle Daniel bore.
> Southey, *The Lay of the Laureate.*

With the death of Bernard Andreas, the office of court poet, or, to beg the question a little, the official title of poet laureate, virtually lapsed until Ben Jonson busied himself in rehabilitating it. Meanwhile poets continued to enjoy court favour and to play their part in court functions, and certain of these poets a later tradition has arbitrarily fixed in the hierarchy of official poets laureate.

The tradition that Spenser and Daniel had the official title was generally accepted in the eighteenth century and persisted even as late as Southey, who counted not only these two but even Drayton among his official predecessors. It seems to have taken definite shape with the publication of the second edition of Wood's *Athenae Oxonienses* in 1721. Wood himself, though guilty of occasional inaccuracies, had been fairly careful in his statements, but the editor of the 1721 edition made a practice of appending to Wood's biographies a few paragraphs of independent observations hastily written and swarming with errors. These additions are distinguished from the work of Wood by quotation marks, and this fact is noted in the preface, but the casual reader of the voluminous pages of the *Athenae* would not be likely to observe the difference or to look back to the preface for the explanation. To Wood's sketch of Davenant, the editor of the second edition appended the following: 'Spencer, as I have been informed, was poet laureat to Queen Elizabeth. When he died, Samuel Daniel succeeded him, and him Ben Johnson, and Ben Johnson Sir Will Davenant, and Davenant John Dryden 1668, and John Dryden, Thomas Shadwell 1689, and Thomas Shadwell, Tate.'[1] The same list occurs in the

[1] *Athenae*, second ed., ii, col. 414. Wood himself calls neither Spenser nor Daniel Poet Laureate. Dryden's patent of 1670, while it enumerates Chaucer, Gower, Jonson, and Davenant among Dryden's predecessors, mentions neither Spenser nor Daniel.

Gentleman's Magazine in 1785. Southey's lines quoted at the head of this chapter assert that Spenser was one of the official laureates, and Scott congratulated Southey on the opportunity afforded by his appointment 'to redeem the crown of Spenser and of Dryden to its pristine dignity'. In a document in the Lord Chamberlain's office,[1] which includes a memorandum on the poets laureate, Spenser and Daniel are included in the official list, and the date of Spenser's appointment is given as 'about 1590'. Haydn in the *Book of Dignities* also includes Spenser and Daniel in the official list.[2]

Spenser heads the list because his unquestioned pre-eminence as a poet caused his contemporaries to pay him the conventional compliment of the laurel crown. 'He may well wear the garland', says Webbe in his *Discourse of English Poetrie* (1586),[3] 'and step before the best of all English poets that I have seen or heard'. A more precise basis for the tradition was subsequently afforded by the fact that in February 1591 Spenser was given a pension of £50 a year; but the circumstances under which this pension was granted are hardly such as to warrant the supposition that either of the parties to the affair looked upon it as an appointment to an office at court. These circumstances may be related in the words of Grosart, whose

[1] File. January–December, 1843 (L.C. $\frac{5}{227}$). Endorsed March 24, 1843: 'A Mem^{m} of Poets Laureate from 1590 to the death of Robert Southey, 21 March, 1843.'

[2] It is unnecessary to dwell upon a few names which have been occasionally included in the laureate list. Hamilton includes Richard Edwards among the 'Volunteer Laureates'. Edwards was master of the children of the Chapel Royal, author of various poems and interludes, and a popular entertainer. Warton calls him 'the first fiddle, the most fashionable sonneteer, the readiest rhymer, and the most facetious mimic at Court', but there is no warrant for including him even in the 'Volunteer' list. Hamilton would have been nearer to the facts if he had included Thomas Churchyard among his 'Volunteer Laureates', instead of Edwards. Churchyard produced many of the pageants and shows which celebrated Queen Elizabeth's progresses (see Nichols, *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth, passim*), and in 1592, when the poet was over seventy, he was pensioned by the Queen for his literary services. In his *Pleasant Conceit* published in that year, there is the following 'Address': 'May it please your Majestie, so long as breath is in my breast, life in the heart, and spirit in the head, I cannot hold the hand from penning some acceptable device to your Majestie, not to compare (in my own weening) with the rare poets of our flourishing age . . . which "pleasant conceit" I have presumed this New Year's Day to present to your Majestie, in sign and token, that your gracious goodness towards me oftentimes (and chiefly now for my pension) shall never go out of my remembrance with all dutiful services belonging to a loyal subject.'

[3] Gregory Smith, *Eliz. Crit. Essays*, I, 263.

somewhat embellished account is based on the report in Fuller's *Worthies*.[1]

'This poem [*Colin Clout's Come Home Again*] makes it certain that Raleigh took Spenser to court, obtained audience for him with Elizabeth, and won her "favourable ear" for the first three books of *The Faerie Queene*. . . . Her Majesty—so the tradition runs—"ordered a goodly sum to be awarded to the newe poete". The penurious Lord Treasurer—wherever others and not himself or kin were concerned—demurred, dropping *sotto voce* the question, "What? All this for a song?" Elizabeth, tainted o'times by her chief adviser's penuriousness, gave way and said, "Well, let him have what *is reason*." Ultimately, as the state patent proves, a pension of £50 was granted . . . in February, 1591.'[2]

This pension does not designate him laureate, and does not prescribe any services in return,[3] but it has, like the pension subsequently conferred upon Jonson, an anticipative interest, as an official recognition of poetic achievement. For the curiously tenacious tradition that Spenser was the *official* poet laureate of Elizabeth, this pension is the only official warrant. Even the pension was apparently not paid; and though Jonson's statement to Drummond that 'Spenser died for lack of bread', and Camden's that he died '*inops*', are probably exaggerations, there is absolutely no reason to believe that Spenser enjoyed any court favour. In the oft-quoted passage of the *Prothalamium*, Spenser laments his

> long fruitlesse stay
> In Princes court;

and Henry Peacham, who reached maturity before Spenser died, leaves the matter beyond doubt: 'Spenser did never get any preferment in his life, save toward the latter end, he became a Clerk of the Council in Ireland.'[4] The very title poet laureate, itself, had no *official* significance for Spenser's contemporaries. Francis Meres, for example, in a reference to Skelton in *Palladis Tamia* (1598), adds parenthetically: 'I know not for what great worthines surnamed the Poet Laureat.'

[1] Ed. Nuttall, ii. 379.

[2] *Works of Edmund Spenser*, ed. Grosart (*Spenser Soc. Pub.*), i. 158 and 164.

[3] See Malone, *Works of John Dryden*, Lond. 1800, i. 84. The warrant for Spenser's pension is said by Malone to have been 'discovered some years ago in the Chapel of the Rolls'. Malone saw it there and describes its contents. A search instituted by the present writer failed to disclose it.

[4] *Truth of Our Times* (1638).

There is then no warrant in fact for the inclusion of Spenser among the official laureates, but tradition, obviously, could not have dealt otherwise with him. Amid the multitude of Elizabethan poets who sought to pave the way to preferment by dedications and eulogistic verse to Queen Elizabeth, and who were thus by way of being unofficial laureates, Spenser occupied a unique position. Dedicated 'To the Most High, Mightie, and Magnificent Emperesse Renowmed for Pietie, Vertue, and all Gratious Government ELIZABETH', *The Faerie Queene* at once established its author as the greatest poet of his time. 'Fame's eldest favourite', Nashe could call him in 1593,[1] when only the first three books had appeared, and from Sidney down to that casual journalist of criticism, Francis Meres, Spenser's contemporaries set him on a pinnacle apart. Assured in his own generation, his fame suffered no diminution during the period when a poet-laureate tradition was in process of formation. By 1616 Spenser was already rated among the classics, for in that year Jonson places him among the

> Far-famed spirits of this happy isle
> That, for your sacred songs have gained the style
> Of Phoebus' sons.[2]

As the spontaneous enthusiasms of the Elizabethans merged into a period of more reasoned criticism, Spenser still kept his high place. Milton characteristically found in him the great teacher: 'Our sage and serious Spenser, whom I dare be known to think a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas';[3] and even Davenant, though Bishop Usher cried out upon him for speaking 'against my old friend Edmund Spenser,' placed the author of *The Faerie Queene* as 'the last of this short File of Heroick Poets',[4] Homer, Virgil, Lucan, Statius, and Tasso. And finally Dryden, despite the severity of his judgement on Spenser's faults, found 'in *The Faerie Queene* that which I had been looking for so long in vain',[5] and acknowledged that 'Virgil in Latin and Spenser in English have been my masters'.[6]

To be thus rated, at the moment when the laureate tradition was in process of formation, as one of the great poets of all time and as *the* poet of the Elizabethan period; to have dedicated his heroic poem to the queen; and to have said in the prefatory letter to Raleigh: 'In that Faery Queene I meane *Glory* in my generall intention, but

[1] Dedication of *Christ's Tears over Jerusalem.*
[2] Jonson, *The Golden Age Restored.*
[3] *Areopagitica.*
[4] Preface to *Gondibert.*
[5] *Essay on Satire.*
[6] *Discourse on Heroick Poetry.*

in my particular I conceive the most excellent and glorious person of our soveraine the Queene, and her kingdome in Faery land'; and, finally, to have been pensioned by his sovereign mistress—these things were enough in themselves to establish the tradition that Spenser must have been in some official sense the poet laureate of Elizabeth. If we add the exquisite tribute to Elizabeth in *The Shepheards Calender* and the delicate and beautiful picture of Belphoebe in *The Faerie Queene*, the poet attains the supreme height of graceful compliment. But even this achievement pales beside the fact that Spenser dared to be mentor as well as eulogist. 'These his labours' which Spenser dedicated to the queen 'to live with the eternitie of her fame', were to have as their 'generall end . . . to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline'; and, through that many-sided picture, with its dangers portrayed no less than its joys, to shadow forth, as a recent critic has aptly phrased it, 'beyond the welter of court intrigue and petty politics the glorious vision of an imperial England'.[1]

Here was no mere court trifler, but a veritable poet-sage whose rôle would seem to set him apart from the ordinary men of letters of his time. That tradition should have accorded him the title of official poet laureate to Queen Elizabeth was at best a scant tribute; but tradition could hardly do less with one who was in reality the laureate of an imperial dream.

The wreath which 'divinest Spenser wore' also adorned, according to Southey, the brows of learned Drayton and gentle Daniel. Tradition has not generally sought to include Drayton in the official list,[2] though there are few court poets of the late Elizabethan period whose careers would seem to have furnished more occasion for it. *Idea: the Shepherd's Garland* (1593), with its eulogies of Queen Elizabeth, the Countess of Pembroke, and Lucy, Countess of Bedford, was the beginning of a whole series of such panegyrics, directed, one is tempted to believe, rather more with an eye to the main chance than by the heaven-born inspiration of the muse. In fact, Drayton is quite explicit.

> Unto thy fame my Muse herself shall task,
> Which rain'st upon me thy sweet golden showers,
> Upon whose praise my soul shall spend her powers.

[1] Greenlaw, 'Spenser and British Imperialism', *Modern Philology*, ix. 370.

[2] Occasional instances may be found, however—for example, this eighteenth-century edition of *Queen Mab*: 'The History of Queen Mab; or the Court of Faery . . . by Michael Drayton, Esq; Poet Laureat to King James I and King Charles I. London. Printed for M. Cooper in Paternoster-row. 1751.'

This is the characteristic laureate road. If it had led, as Drayton evidently intended that it should, to raised estate and reward at court, Drayton would have shared with Daniel in the eighteenth-century tradition, the honour of the official laureateship.

Daniel's courtly flattery was more fruitful, and the results supplied a better basis for the tradition. His patroness was the Countess of Pembroke, and her influence, supplemented by Daniel's adulation in the *Panegyric Congratulatorie* on the accession of James I, promptly brought him the appointment of Licenser of Plays. This appointment, a subsequent one as Groom of the Privy Chamber, and his activity as a writer of court masques between the years 1604 and 1615,[1] account for the tradition that he was official poet laureate to Elizabeth and James. The memorandum in the Lord Chamberlain's office 'of Poets Laureate from 1590 to the death of Robt Southey', gives the date of Daniel's 'appointment' as '1598–9'. Grosart is more exact: 'It has somehow got to be a tradition that Daniel succeeded Spenser as Poet Laureate to Elizabeth. But there seems no historic ground for either having been more than favoured poets. We know how wistfully Daniel looked back on the "spacious times of great Elizabeth", and how utter was the contrast to him (even with Queen Anne's noble appreciative and continuous favor) of the Court of James. Read and reread the infinitely pathetic and beautiful "Epistle" before "Philotas".'[2]

As for the validity of the tradition, it need only be said that there is no documentary warrant for it. Daniel's heart does not seem to have been in the masques which he wrote for James, and which Chamberlain characterized as 'solemn and dull'. Daniel was a poet, not a mere maker of court entertainments:

> And therefore, since I have outlived the date
> Of former grace, acceptance and delight,
> I would my lines, late-born beyond the fate
> Of her spent line, had never come to light.
> So had I not been taxed for wishing well,
> Nor now mistaken by the censuring stage,
> Nor in my fame and reputation fell,
> Which I esteem more than what all the age
> Of th' earth can give. But years have done this wrong,
> To make me write too much and live too long.

[1] Daniel seems to have been indebted to Lucy, Countess of Bedford, for his employment as a writer of masques at the court of James. Nichols (*Progresses of King James*, i. 311) prints a letter of Daniel's, thanking her for 'preferring him to Her Majestie (Queen Anne) for this employment'.

[2] *Works of Samuel Daniel*, v. 318.

It is true that there was enough of court activity and court reward to lend colour to the tradition of his laureateship, but it is a pity that that tradition should not have been based on work which would have been in character with the office. *The Civil Wars*, though Drayton was right in calling its author 'too much historian in verse', has a fine dignity and patriotic fervour which would well befit an official singer of the court. *Musophilus* is a noble dream of the power of the poet and man of letters in the ideal commonwealth, and even in the controversial *Defence of Rhyme* he speaks with a noble enthusiasm of the 'State' of that England which he loves. There would have been a certain quality of dignity and worth if not of greatness in the author of *Musophilus* as poet laureate—or, again, in the author of such words as these:

> I know I shall be read among the rest,
> So long as men speak English, and so long
> As verse and virtue shall be in request,
> Or grace to honest industry belong.

But there is absolutely no evidence that the laureateship existed in Daniel's day, or that he was singled out from his contemporaries by any such title.

V

JONSON AND DAVENANT: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LAUREATE TRADITION

> How rectified
> Times, Manners, Customes! Innovations spied!
> Sought out the Fountaines, Sources, Creekes, Pathes, Wayes!
> And noted the Beginnings and Decays!
> Where is that nominall Marke or reall Rite,
> Form, Art, or Ensigne, that hath 'scaped your sight?
> Jonson, 'Epistle to Selden' (prefixed to *Titles of Honor*).

> *The humble Petition of poore Ben*
> *To the best of Monarchs, Masters, Men,*
> *King Charles*—
> —Doth most humbly show it,
> To your Majestie your Poët:
> That whereas your royal *Father*
> James *the blessed*, pleas'd the rather,
> Of his speciall grace to *Letters*,
> To make all the Muses debters
> To his bountie; by extension
> Of a free Pöetique Pension,
> A large hundred Markes annuitie,
> To be given me in gratuitie
> For done service, and to come: . . .
> Please your Majestie to make
> Of your grace, for goodnesse sake,
> Those your *Fathers Markes*, your *Pounds*.
> Jonson, *Underwoods*.

With Ben Jonson we reach the first of those generally designated as 'official' poets laureate. The belief that Jonson actually held the office and bore the official title is based (1) on the existence of two patents, the one of February 1, 1616, granting him a pension of 100 marks, the other of April 23, 1630, increasing his pension to £100 and adding a 'terrse of Canary Spanish Wyne yearely'; (2) on his service as a writer of masques at court, these masques being taken as a function of his laureateship; (3) on a series of poems addressed respectively to James I and Charles I, which are described (for example, by Fleay, *English Drama*, i. 356, and by C. H. Herford in the article on Jonson in the *D. N. B.*) as 'laureate poems'.

The first of these patents (Patent Roll, 13 James I, 29 Roll 2084, No. 12: see Appendix II) grants Jonson a pension of 100 marks a year 'in consideration of the good and acceptable service done and

to be done unto us'. It does not appoint him to an office or designate him poet laureate,[1] as do the patents of Dryden, Shadwell, and Tate. If it had even been tacitly understood as permitting him to use the title of poet laureate, it is not unlikely that Jonson, who had his share of vanity and self-assertion, would have thus called himself on the title-page of the *Masque of Lethe* which came out in the same year. Nor is it by any means the first instance of the pensioning of a poet for his poetical services. Churchyard was pensioned for providing entertainments for the progresses of Queen Elizabeth, and Spenser was pensioned, at Raleigh's solicitation, after he had produced the first three books of *The Faerie Queene*.[2]

Again, in the time of Charles I, after Jonson's pension had been allowed to lapse, and Jonson had made the appeal quoted at the beginning of this chapter, a patent was issued (Patent Roll, 6 Charles I, part ii, Roll 2543, No. 37;[3] see Appendix III) granting him a pension of £100 'in consideration of the good and acceptable service done unto us and our said Father by the said Benjamin Johnson and especially to encourage him to proceed in those services of wit and pen which we have enjoined upon him and which we expect from him', and adding a terse of wine yearly. This has been described as 'the first patent regularly issued for the post of poet laureate'.[4] But it does not appoint him to any office or designate him by the title of poet laureate, and if Mr. Saintsbury's statement that 'one of the chief functions of the poet laureate [in the seventeenth century] was to compose masques and such like pieces to be acted at court'[5] could be accepted, we should have to reckon with the fact that this 'appointment' of 1630 came at the very time when Jonson had lost favour at court, and that, though he produced the court masque for the Christmas festivities of that year, the composition of the next ensuing masque was committed to Aurelian Townshend. Jonson was left embittered, and could well lament the untrustworthiness of his shrewish mistress, Rhyme.

The picturesque perquisite of the butt of sack possesses only an anticipatory interest and significance, as far as the laureateship is concerned. It may have been, as Mr. Lounsbury suggests, 'the

[1] Fleay (*English Drama*, i. 350) describes this as 'a pension of 100 marks as poet laureate'.
[2] See pp. 34–5, and p. 35 *n*.
[3] The original is in the Bodleian Library, Rawlinson MS. V.A. 289, 12.
[4] Hamilton, *Poets Laureate*, p. 53.
[5] *Life of Dryden* (English Men of Letters), p. 69.

conviviality to which Jonson was addicted that originally suggested the character of the gift'.[1] It may have been due to a plea to the court based on Jonson's knowledge that great poets in the past had had such a perquisite.[2] But the granting of an annual butt of sack to the later actual laureates when they were officially appointed to the office cannot be used as evidence on Jonson's behalf. It indicates only that the court, in Dryden's time, assumed that Jonson had been regularly appointed to the office, and used his perquisite as a precedent.

In respect to the second point on which the tradition of Jonson's laureateship is based, it is beyond question that he occupied a unique position among those who supplied masques to the Jacobaean court. Daniel's *Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*, presented at Hampton Court on January 8, 1604, is the earliest masque preserved to us; but beginning with *The Masque of Blackness*, of Twelfth Night, 1605, Jonson supplied a masque for the Christmas festivities at Whitehall each year, with the exception of 1607, 1612, 1614, 1619, and 1620, up to 1625, and, after an interval of silence, for Twelfth Night, 1631. Add to these the masques and speeches supplied on other occasions at court or elsewhere in the royal presence, and it becomes clear that Jonson's contributions to the entertainment of the court bulk much more largely than those of any other author of his day. It is not strange that Jonson, thus employed with far more frequency than any of his rivals, should have referred to himself and Inigo Jones in the *Masque of Augurs* as 'the King's Poet and the King's Architect', and should have more explicitly described his function in *Neptune's Triumph*:

> POET. You are not his Majesty's Confectioner, are you?
> COOK. No, but one that has as good a title to the room—his Master Cook. What are you, sir?
> POET. The most unprofitable of his servants I, sir—the Poet. A kind of a Christmas Ingine; one that is used, at least once a year, for a trifling instrument of wit or so.

It cannot be argued, however, that this preponderance in itself gave Jonson any special position or privilege. He was 'used, at least once a year, for a trifling instrument of wit or so', because he could be counted on to do the thing well; but this did not prevent

[1] *Studies in Chaucer*, i. 174.

[2] Mr. W. C. Hazlitt has recorded among books surviving from Jonson's library a copy of Speght's *Chaucer*. This work enumerates among that poet's 'rewards', *unum dolium vini per annum durante vita*.

Daniel, Drayton, Campion, Chapman, and others from being employed to entertain the court with masques, even during Jonson's heyday; and his self-assumed title of king's poet could not save him from being supplanted when the wave of his popularity began to ebb. The fact that Jonson was for a considerable period the most popular and successful of the various writers of masques for the entertainment of the court, does not make him an official poet laureate.

Nor can his poems addressed to James and Charles be taken as evidence of official position. He wrote many such poems,[1] from his *Panegyre on the Happy Entrance of James Our Sovereign*, in March 1604, to what Fleay (*English Drama*, i. 356) characterizes as his 'last laureate verses' on January 1, 1635; but New Year's tributes, birthday tributes, eulogies, addresses, and appeals in verse have been penned by poets to their sovereigns from time immemorial. Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline literature is plentifully sprinkled with them. The eighteenth-century laureates were obliged by sack and pension to produce a New Year's ode and a birthday ode each year, but the existence of occasional New Year and birthday tributes from the pen of an early seventeenth-century poet is not *prima facie* evidence that the author held an office or was fulfilling any other obligation than one of gratitude for financial assistance. The frequency of these tributes about the year 1630 reflects Jonson's gratitude for the relief accorded by the grant of that year.

Finally, it may be noted that on the title-page of the folio collection of Jonson's works, issued only three years after his death, he is not described as poet laureate. On the other hand, in the Davenant folio,[2] issued after Dryden's appointment had given official status to the position, Davenant is credited with the title.

It is clear that the poet laureateship was not officially created during Jonson's life, but it is equally clear that the *popular* conception of such an office—an officially appointed court poet who should be

[1] Notably, 'To King James, upon the Happy False Rumour of his Death' (1606); 'Epigram to King Charles for a Hundred Pounds sent me in Sickness' (1629); 'Epigram on the Prince's Birth' (1630); 'Epigram on the Queen then Lying in' (1630); 'An Ode or Song by All the Muses, in Celebration of Her Majesty's Birthday' (1630); 'An Epigram to the Household' (1630); 'The Humble Petition of Poor Ben; To the Best of Monarchs, Masters, Men' (1630); 'To the King on his Birthday' (November 19, 1632); 'To My Lord the King on the Christening of his Second Son James' (1633); 'A New Year's Gift Sung to King Charles' (1635).

[2] London, 1673. 'My Author', says Herringman in his Address to the Reader, 'was Poet Laureat to two Great Kings.'

styled poet laureate—began now to take shape. There were indeed a number of reasons for the definite development of the tradition at this period. These may be briefly enumerated as:

I. The gradual development of such conditions at court as would make possible the popular entertainment of the idea of an officially appointed court-poet.

II. The development of a special retrospective interest in the life and times of Henry VII, at whose court the presence of a poet laureate was a matter of record.

III. The familiarity of men of letters with classical literature and tradition and with the literature and life of the Italy of the renaissance.

Among the various effects of the renaissance in England, one of the most marked was the rapid development of the English court as a centre of refinement and the cultivation of the arts. Elizabeth, taught by the judicious Ascham, entered upon her reign with an equipment of scholarship and culture incomparably superior to any of her predecessors. Her predilection for letters, her love of pageantry and courtly compliment, would in any event have given tone to her court. But her personal inclinations were supplemented by an external influence even more potent. Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano*, translated by Sir Thomas Hoby, only three years after Elizabeth's accession, as 'The Courtyer of Count Baldessar Castilio . . . very necessary and profitable for yonge gentilmen and gentilwomen abiding in court, palaice and place', became the text-book of the English courtier. 'In letters', writes Castiglione, 'I will have [him] to bee more then indyfferentlye well seene, at the least in those studyes, which they call Humanitie, and to have not only the understandinge of the Latin tunge, but also of the Greeke, because of the many and sundrye thinges that with greate excellencye are written in it. Let him much exercise hymselfe in poets, and no lesse in Oratours and Historiographers, and also in writinge bothe rime and prose, and especiallye in this our vulgar tunge. For beside the contentation that he shall receive thereby himselfe he shall by this meanes never want pleasaunt interteinments with women which ordinarylye love such matters.'[1]

[1] *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. Hoby, 1561, ed. Raleigh, Tudor Trans., London, 1900, pp. 84–5. See Raleigh's account of the influence of *The Courtier* in England, and in general of Elizabethan 'courtly civilization', introduction, pp. lxi, ff. Ascham, who was Queen Elizabeth's tutor, said that *The Courtier*, if 'advisedly read and diligently followed but one year at home in England, would do a young gentleman more good . . . than

The *entourage* of Elizabeth numbered many who fell not far short of this ideal, and two, at least, Raleigh and Sidney, who perfectly embodied Castiglione's larger conception of the courtier who should be at once man of action and man of letters. Poetry became also, not merely the embellishment of the noble, but the path of advancement for the ambitious. The royal progresses, the Twelfth Night revels, the plays privately performed at court, afforded opportunity for carefully considered compliments, and as Una, Casta, Diana, Cynthia, or Belphoebe, the Virgin Queen was praised alike by those who had her favour and those who sought it. Poems manifold were dedicated to her—*The Faerie Queene*, Harington's translation of the *Orlando*, Fairfax's version of *Tasso*—to mention only a few of the most important—all with the hope of reward and advancement, and the great courtiers, Leicester, Southampton, Sidney, Essex, rivalled their mistress as the objects of dedications and appeals for patronage.

This multiplicity of courtly compliment on the one hand and of more or less sycophantic tribute on the other served to make of panegyric poetry almost a species in itself, and to develop—in men of the type of Gascoigne, for example—what may not unfairly be described as a school of professional panegyrists. But the path of the panegyrist was not always easy in the court of the careful and parsimonious queen. Dedications and tributes did not always elicit gifts from the royal exchequer. Here and there such an assiduous hanger-on of the court as Thomas Churchyard was pensioned, but Churchyard's long labours in masque and tribute were rewarded only when the old poet had rounded out his threescore and ten. And not even the influence of Raleigh on behalf of the author of *The Faerie Queene* could wholly counteract Burghley's contemptuous 'What, all this for a song?'

With the accession of James the horizon brightened, and panegyric poetry, as a means to recognition and reward, acquired a new impetus. An era of extravagance succeeded Elizabeth's careful restraint. The advent of the 'poet-king' was hailed as the golden opportunity of poets at court.[1] Bids for patronage and expectations of 'raised estate' and 'golden showers' as the price of panegyric had never been so numerous or so frank. In this rivalry for the favour of a pleasure-loving monarch who was himself a poet, nothing could be

three years' travel abroad spent in Italy' (*Scholemaster*, ed. Arber, p. 66). Castiglione himself had taught Elizabeth Italian.

[1] Cf. Jonson's epigram to King James, beginning

> How, best of Kings, dost thou a Scepter beare!
> How, best of *Poets*, dost thou Laurell weare!

more natural than the development in the minds of ambitious versifiers of the idea of an official poet, enjoying a definite emolument, and devoting his art to the flattery of the king and the entertainment of the court.

In the second place, the accession of King James, the direct descendant of Henry VII, had stimulated popular interest in the reign of that monarch. 'It may please Your Highness,' writes Bacon, in the dedication to Prince Charles, prefixed to the *Life of Henry VII*,[1] 'in part of my acknowledgement to Your Highness, I have endeavoured to do honour to the memory of the last King of England that was ancestor to the King Your Father and Yourself; and was that King to whom both unions may in a sort refer; that of the Roses being in him consummate, and that of the kingdoms by him begun; besides his times deserve it.'

Bacon's interest was primarily in the statecraft and military successes of Henry VII, but other historians did not neglect Henry's poet laureate. John Speed in the *Historie of Britaine*, 1611, refers to Bernard Andreas [2] as Henry's 'Poet Laureat', gives an account of the *Sapphic Ode* with which Andreas greeted his master on the occasion of the triumphal entry after Bosworth Field, quotes another poem by the laureate and adds a metrical translation of it, refers to several others, and gives that characterization of Henry's official poet which has already been quoted in these pages.

For an officially appointed court poet, bearing the title of poet laureate, there was, therefore, a known precedent in English history, and in that period of English history to which the subjects of James naturally turned. And for the title itself there was the added, perhaps even the greater, justification of classical precedent. At no other time had the interest in classical themes and in classical literature been so marked. Always a favourite field for Elizabethan dramatists, Roman history was now particularly prolific, with a harvest of which Heywood's *Rape of Lucrece*, Marston's *Sophonisba*, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus*, and Jonson's *Sejanus* and *Catiline*, will serve as sufficient examples. Of the classics themselves, for those who could not read them in the original, Golding's

[1] Bacon's *Life of Henry VII* was not put into final form till 1621; but Spedding publishes (Bacon, *Works*, vi. 17 ff.) a fragment of the *Life* which belongs to a much earlier date. For some of his material, as both Spedding and Gairdner point out, Bacon was indebted to the *Historia* of Bernard Andreas.

[2] *Supra*, p. 24.

Ovid, Phaer's and Stanyhurst's translations of Virgil, and Drant's Horace were an inheritance from the early days of Elizabeth, and Chapman's Homer had just come from the press. Philemon Holland had recently completed his translation of Pliny's *Natural History*, with its comprehensive account of the uses and symbolism of the laurel. Familiar, too, since the days of Wyatt and Surrey had been the work of Petrarch—a familiarity renewed in 1612 by Chapman's translation. Tofte's *Laura*, an imitation of Petrarch, had appeared in 1597; Harington's *Ariosto*, with its beautiful Italian engravings, in 1591, and Fairfax's *Tasso*, in 1600.

Nor should it be overlooked that both the spacious times of Elizabeth and the reign of her successor were an era of exceptional travel, with Italy as the favourite goal. The fine significance of the laureate tradition in Italy could not have failed to be familiarly known to the travelled Englishman, and the practice of laureating there was by no means extinct. It was only a few years before the accession of James that Tasso had been called to Rome to receive the crown as the true laureate successor of Petrarch, and had died on the eve of the ceremony.

In this age of wide-ranging knowledge, Ben Jonson, pupil of Camden, was among the first in the catholicity of his interests, his antiquarian enthusiasm, and his 'curious learning'. He had not been honoured by any ceremony of laureation, and had not had the title of poet laureate conferred upon him in any official document. But for a number of years he had been the foremost writer of masques for the entertainment of the court. He had styled himself 'King's Poet', and he knew that in the past, both in England and on the Continent, there had been officially appointed king's poets. He had been pensioned by the king 'in consideration of the good and acceptable service done and to be done'. He had been reminded by Lord Falkland that King James, in conferring the pension,

> Declared great Jonson worthiest to receive
> The garland which the Muses' hands did weave.

Petrarch had been a poet laureate. Tasso had been officially invited to receive the title. Long before, in the days of Jonson's favourite Martial, Domitian had had his poet laureate. Here was a title peculiarly suited to Ben's genius and antiquarian taste. Two years before he received his pension, his friend John Selden had published a quarto entitled *Titles of Honor*, in which no reference had been made to the title of poet laureate. It was a little book, and there were stores of

information on the subject still untapped in Selden's mind. The book might well be enlarged in a second edition. In that event, Jonson asked his learned friend to include a discussion of the one title which could aptly crown the poet's career. In due time (1631) the second edition came, and in it Selden duly 'performed a promise to you, my beloved Ben Jonson'. As Selden's performance of that promise is, in a way, one of the foundation stones of the modern laureateship, it is worth quoting in considerable detail.

Selden treats of laureation in his chapter on the powers of Counts Palatine. After noting that they have authority 'to make Doctors, Licentiats, Masters, and Bachilers of either Law, Diuinitie or the Arts. . . . And these Graduats have by the same Bull equall dignitie and priuiledge with all others made in any Vniuersitie', he proceeds:

'The course also vsed by Counts Palatin in giuing the Crown of Laurell to Poets is seen especially in that of Joannes Crusius his receiuing it at Strasbourg,[1] in *An.*1616, from the hands of Thomas Obrechtus a professor of Law and a Count Palatin. . . . First the time and place were solemnely appointed by a publique instrument from the Count, wherin hee shewes how much degrees in learning conduce to the aduancement of it, and then that Paulus Crusius hauing first receiued the dignitie of Master of Arts, now, out of his happy vain in Verse, deserued also the Laurell of Poetrie, and therfore by vertue of the power and licence that hee had from the Emperor, hee appointed the XXIII. of December . . . for the solemnitie of giuing it him. . . . At the day appointed, the assembly being full, Crusius begins with the recitall of this petitory Epigram. . . . Then the Count Palatin made a long speech in praise of the art of Poetrie. . . . Then Crusius recites a Poem of about CCC. verses, Hexameter and Pentameter, his Theme being (chosen by himself) *Quam nihil omnis homo!* And these verses are called in the act of Creation, *Specimen pro impetranda Laurea.* Next, the Count Palatin (to the end that this his act of conferring the Lawrell might have the fuller credit and autoritie with all that were present) produces the Emperors Patent that made him Count Palatin and gaue him this autoritie, and hath it recognized upon a solemne obseruation of the Seale and subscription by a publique Notarie, and openly read by him also. Thence he summes up the authoritie given him and shewes that the course is that whosoeuer is to be thus crowned with the Laurell ought first to take an Oth to the Emperor and his Successors, which hee bids the publique Notary read

[1] A full treatment of laureation in Germany in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century may be found in Janssen's *History of the German People*, trans. Christie, vol. xiii. The wedding of the Princess Elizabeth to the German Elector Palatine Frederick V in 1613, with its attendant festivities, may well have helped to bring English people into touch with German life and customs.

to Crusius, and required Crusius carefully to harken to it. . . . By direction then of the Count, hee layes his hand on the book and sweares. . . . The Oath thus taken; because (saith the Count) I doubt not but that during your whole life you will truly obserue what you haue thus sworne, it remains only that I now give you the Laurell appointed for you. *Te itaque Iohannem Paulum Crusium . . . hac Laurea Poetica coronamus, condecoramus, donamus, ac Poetam & Vatem Laureatum pronuntiamus . . . aureoque hoc Annulo ornamus, condecoramus, & hoc ipso Laureae Poeticae insignibus ac titulis insignimus, inuestimus, aliorumque Poetarum numero, Ordini, & Consortio cooptamus, adscribimus & aggregamus. . . .*

'With a Laurell we see also a Ring was giuen him. And after the Count had made another speech touching the Laurell and Ring, the crowned Poet recites another Poem of thankes for his dignitie, and so the Act ended.'

After enumerating several other poets who received the laurel at the hands of Counts Palatine, Selden proceeds:

'This custome of giuing Crowns of Laurell to Poets . . . as the Ensignes of the degree taken of Mastership in Poetrie, and that by Imperiall autoritie exercised either by the Emperors own hand, or by Counts Palatine, or by others that haue such delegat autoritie, hath continued about CL. yeers at least in the Empire. In the French Empire I remember no example of it. Nor was any Poet, after the translation to Germany, untill that of Petrarch, some say, made Laureat.[1] Neither was hee by the Emperor, nor by any Count Palatin, but by the Citie of Rome, and that in the Capitoll, whence being carried with a pompous attendance, he consecrated his Laurell on the top of Saint Peters Church. . . . But there was some use in the German Empire, long before Petrarch, of the Emperors giuing this Laurell; and perhaps it beganne there about the time of those other degrees in Learning which came into frequent use about Frederique the I. For in the time of S. Francis (who liued in the end of that Emperor) we find that a Poet had been then crowned by the Emperor. Among those that came to see Saint Francis, *quidam secularium cantionum* (saith Bonauenture that liued also neer C. yeeres before *Petrarch*) *Curiosus inuentor, qui ab Imperatore propterea fuerat coronatus & exinde Rex versuum dictus, virum Dei contemptorem mundalium adire proposuit*; and hee tels vs further of some Visions of this

[1] The civic coronation of poets was common in Italy before Petrarch's day. It will be remembered that Dante wished to be crowned with the laurel wreath in his native city:

> If e'er the sacred poem . . .
> . . . be destined to prevail
> Over the cruelty which bars me forth . . .
> I shall forthwith return: and, standing up
> At my baptismal font, shall claim the wreath
> Due to the poet's temples.
>
> *Paradiso*, Can. XXV, trans. Cary.

crowned Poet.[1] But afterward the Laurell was giuen by Frederique the III. to Conradus Celtes, and he was called the first Poet Laureat of Germany, and was afterward made by this Patent of Maximilian the I. Superintendent or Rector of the Colledge of Poetrie and Rhetorique in Vienna, with the authoritie of giuing the Laurell to such as deserued it.'

After turning back at this point to discuss the Olympic games and laureation generally among the Greeks and Romans, and noting from a reference in Lucretius that the custom antedates the Olympic games, Selden continues:

'As from the vse of the old Empire, the later took the Example of crowning Poets, so from that of the later, som vse of giuing the Laurel, was anciently receiued into England. John Skelton had that title of Laureatt under Henry the VIII. And in the same time Robert Whitington called himself *Grammaticae magister & Protouates Angliae in florentissima Oxoniensi Academia Laureatus*. Under Edward the fourth one John Kay by the title of his humble Poet Lawreat dedicates to him the siege of Rhodes in prose. But John Gower, a famous Poet under Richard the II. buried in S. Mary Oueries Church, hath his Statue Crowned with Iuy mixt with Roses. . . . But of the Crown of Laurell giuen to Poets, hitherto. And thus haue I, by no vnseasonable digression, performed a promise to you my beloued Ben. Jonson. Your curious learning and iudgement may correct where I have erred, and adde where my notes and memory have left me short. You are

——— omnia Carmina doctus
Et calles Mython plasmata & Historiam.

And so you both fully know what concernes it, and your singular Excellencie in the Art most eminently deserues it.'[2]

'Your singular excellencie in the art most eminently deserves it,' said Selden; 'He told them plainly he deserved the Bays,' Suckling wrote of Jonson in *A Session of the Poets*, but though Jonson had such satisfaction as he could derive from the tributes and 'laureate' compliments of his contemporaries, there is no reason to believe that he lived to see the laureateship established as an actual office of the court. What he did live to see, however, was the attribution to him, by a sort of popular acclaim, of a title which he was antiquarian

[1] This early instance of laureation, oddly preserved through the association with St. Francis, is probably not, as Selden supposes, academic in origin. Frater Pacificus, as he was styled in the order, is described in *Liber Aureus* (*lib. prim.* 85) as relinquishing the world '*compunctus cum esset rex versuum et laureatus ab Imperatore Frederico*'. It may be inferred that, like Rahere, he gave up the rôle of a court entertainer to enter the religious life. The visions of Brother Pacificus are described in the *Fioretti*.

[2] *Titles of Honor*. By John Selden. The Second Edition. . . . London. . . . MDCXXXI, pp. 402–13.

enough to value for its own sake, even though, of itself, it brought neither sack nor pension.

Of Jonson's traditional successor, Davenant,[1] there is a different story to tell. The evidence in his case is still mainly inferential rather than documentary. It is not until we reach the warrant for the appointment of John Dryden, on April 13, 1668, that we find any document in the Record Office with the significant endorsement on the margin: '*To bee Poet Laureatt.*' But there is reason to believe that the cumulative force of the tradition which Jonson had helped to foster operated to give to Davenant a quasi-official, even if unrecorded, recognition as poet laureate.

Unlike Jonson, Davenant had from his boyhood breathed the atmosphere of the court. After service as page, first to the Duchess of Richmond and then to Sir Fulke Greville, Lord Brook, he sought, on the death of the latter, the patronage of the Earl of Somerset. The dedication to the earl, prefixed to Davenant's tragedy of *Albovine*, written when the poet was only twenty-two, is an atrocious piece of flattery. It gained its end, however, and no less a personage than Edward Hyde, afterwards Earl of Clarendon and Lord Chancellor, saw fit to congratulate Davenant that his wit

> . . . hath purchased such a patron's name
> To deck thy front.[2]

The following year saw equally extravagant bids to new patrons, Lord Weston, Lord High Treasurer,[3] and the Earl of Dorset.[4] Just how much these various appeals and protestations helped the aspiring poet, it is impossible to say, but they imply that Davenant had accumulated a certain amount of interest in influential quarters. To the friends who figure in the various prefatory poems to the three tragedies, must be added at least three persons of importance who were acquisitions of the ensuing few years—Sir John Suckling, who satirized the poet sharply, but remained on good terms with him; Endymion Porter, and Henry Jermyn, afterwards Earl of St. Albans.

[1] *D. N. B.*, the *Cambr. Hist. Eng. Lit.*, &c., adopt the spelling 'D'Avenant'. *D. N. B.* bases this upon a tradition that the poet believed himself descended from a Burgundian family which bore the name of 'Avenant'. But if this were true, why not 'd'Avenant'? In *Madagascar with other Poems* (1638) the name is spelled 'Davenant', not only on the title-page, but also in all the prefatory tributes to the author. Suckling, one of Davenant's most intimate friends, prints 'Davenant' in the many references to him in *Fragmenta Aurea* (1646). If the poet himself was satisfied with 'Davenant', it seems hardly worth while for modern editors to perpetuate another spelling of the name.

[2] Poems prefatory to first edition of *Albovine*.

[3] Dedication of *The Cruel Brother*. [4] Dedication of *The Just Italian*.

With such a circle as this, and with his own courtly assiduities,[1] Davenant was certainly in a fair way to preferment, but his actual advent as a court poet seems to have been more immediately due to the influence of Inigo Jones. The quarrel with Jonson which had begun in 1630 over the question of precedence on the title-page of *Chloridia*, and had been embittered by Jonson's satires on the architect, had inclined Inigo to seek other pens to assist him in the masques. Among these were Townshend, Carew, Shirley, Heywood, and Davenant. Less insistent upon their formal rights than Jonson, these younger men would not be so likely to offend an autocrat who could refuse to undertake the repairs of St. Paul's unless, as he said, he 'might be the sole monarch or might have the principality thereof'.[2] Inigo's other protégés were quick to accord precedence to the architect in the masques in which they co-operated with him, and Davenant was no less submissive when, in 1634, *The Temple of Love* 'by Inigo Jones, Surveyor of His Majesty's Works and William Davenant, His Majesty's Servant', was presented at Whitehall.

The Temple of Love was, on the whole, not a bad introduction for the poet. The queen seems from that time forth to have taken Davenant under her special protection. Long afterward, Davenant's widow, in dedicating the 1673 Folio of the poet's works to the king, reminds him 'that your most excellent mother did graciously take him into her family; that she was often diverted by him, and as often smiled upon his endeavours'.

It is at least an interesting coincidence, in the light of the influence which the visit of Prince Frederick, in the reign of James I, may have had in reviving interest in the laureateship,[3] that Davenant's next masque was prepared for the son of the Elector Palatine. *The Prince D'Amour* is a rather slight affair (Davenant explains that it was 'devised and written in three days'), but it contains the usual grist of adroit compliments. It is interesting also to note in passing that

[1] Foreste, in the opening scenes of *The Cruel Brother*, is a good though doubtless unintentional reflection of the poet himself, just as Castruchio with his 'vices-stripped and whipped' is an excellent (and in this case quite intentional) picture of Wither.

FORESTE: The way to Honour is not evermore
The way to Hell; a virtuous man may climb . . .
Let Fame discourse aloud, until she want
An antidote. I am not scared with noise.
Here I dismiss my fears. If I can swell
Unpoisoned by those helps which Heaven forbids,
Fond love of ease shall ne'er my soul dehort.

[2] See Cunningham's *Life of Inigo Jones*, Shak. Soc. Pub., vol. xxxix, pp. 27 ff.

[3] *Supra*, p. 48, *n*.

the music for it was composed by William and Henry Lawes, the latter of whom was associated with Milton in the production of *Comus*.

On the subject-matter of Davenant's next two plays, *The Wits* and *The Platonic Lovers*, it is not necessary to dwell, in this connexion, but it is important to note that they were dedicated, respectively, in terms of personal friendship, to two men whose influence at court was great. Endymion Porter, to whom Davenant addressed a number of poems, and who reciprocated on more than one occasion with verses in praise of Davenant, was not only a patron of the arts, but one of the most devoted and trusted adherents of Charles II, and had accompanied Charles, while he was still Prince of Wales, on the expedition to Madrid. Henry Jermyn was on terms of peculiar intimacy with the queen, and indeed, according to the gossip of Sir John Reresby, 'had the Queen greatly in awe of him'. Both were and remained warm friends of Davenant. Following the title of Davenant's *Madagascar with Other Poems*, are the words: 'If these Poems live, may their Memories by whom they were cherished, Endim. Porter, H. Jermyn, live with them.'

Meanwhile, Ben Jonson was sixty-four years old, and was known to be ill and nearing his end. Ben had arrogated to himself the title of poet laureate; had been thus designated by his friends; had, with Selden's help, done what he could to rehabilitate the title; and, finally, may be said to have had it popularly accorded him. It is natural that it should have been thought desirable to recognize, by a formal appointment, an office the interest in which had thus been slowly accumulating.

That the topic was of interest to the public is made evident by the timely production, on the part of one of Davenant's friends, Sir John Suckling, a prominent figure at the court, of the poem called *A Session of the Poets*. This poem, written apparently between April 1636 and Jonson's death in August 1637,[1] marshals the poets in a 'Session' because

> The laurel *that had been so long reserved*[2]
> Was now to be given to him best deserved.

In the 'Session' the chair is of course occupied by Apollo, but Selden, the antiquary, who had included a history of the office in his *Titles of Honor*, 'sat hard by the chair'. Thomas May, who was himself an aspirant for recognition as court poet, Waller, Carew, and a number of lesser lights are present. But the most prominent of the candidates

[1] See *The Works of Sir John Suckling*, ed. A. Hamilton Thompson, Lond., 1910, p. 361 *n*.

[2] The italics are mine. It was a matter of common knowledge that the

are Jonson and Davenant. Jonson 'told them plainly he deserved the bays'. The laurel is not accorded to him, but

> Those that were there thought it not fit
> To discontent so ancient a wit;
> And therefore Apollo called him back again,
> And made him mine host of his own New Inn.

A merciless gibe in the time of Ben's old age and infirmity! *The New Inn* had failed notoriously and had driven its author to 'leave the loathed stage'. Thereupon, Davenant is considered. His poetry is thought deserving of the honour, but his claims are rejected because of a physical deformity.

> Surely the company would have been content
> If they could have found any precedent;
> But in all their records either in verse or prose
> There was not one laureate without a nose.

Other poets are then marshalled to the test and rejected, and, finally, to Davenant's huge disgust, the laurel is given to a city alderman.[1] So ends Suckling's burlesque 'Session'. It is, of course, a familiar poem to modern readers, but its documentary significance has not apparently been recognized.

During this period, when the topic of creating a court office of poet laureate may reasonably be assumed to have been under discussion, Davenant, whether intentionally or not, was establishing a claim to recognition. In March 1636, Prince Rupert came to England, and remained there until his departure for Holland in June 1637. In the latter part of his stay, it was proposed that Rupert should lead an expedition to conquer Madagascar. On March 17, 1637, Sir Thomas Roe wrote to Rupert's mother, Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia: 'There are other projects to send Prince Rupert to conquer Madagascar, but that is absurd. It is a course to lose the Prince in a desperate and fruitless action, from which he desires the queen to take him off.' Elizabeth replies, April 1637: 'As for Rupert's romance of Madagascar, it sounds like one of Don Quixote's

title had existed in English tradition. The phrase cannot mean that the title had been 'so long reserved' because pre-empted by Jonson, for Jonson is represented as a claimant for it.

[1] Thompson (*Works of Sir John Suckling*, p. 364) says: 'D'Avenant, as a young man about town, was probably hostile to members of the City Council. During the Civil War (Aubrey, i. 206–8) he took prisoner two aldermen of York, who afterwards were instrumental in saving his life.' As an explanation of a reference in a poem written *c.* 1637, this is not satisfactory. There was evidently some contemporary joke on the subject. Cf. H. Ramsay in *Jonsonus Virbius* (1638): 'You that can aldermen new wits create'; possibly the reference is to the office of City Poet.

conquests, where he promised his trusty squire to make him king of an island.'[1] In May, Sir Thomas Roe was able to reassure Elizabeth: 'The dream of Madagascar, I think, is vanished, and the squire must conquer his own island. A blunt merchant, called to deliver his opinion, said it was a gallant design, but such as wherein he would be loth to venture his younger son.'[2] Sometime, therefore, between March and May 1637, while this wild scheme was the talk of the court, Davenant composed his poem, *Madagascar*, an ecstatic vision in which his disembodied spirit accompanies the prince to the Golden Isle. There can be no doubt that this poem was circulated in manuscript and read to the prince and the court. No courtier would have missed such an opportunity. It was not, however, until after the prince's departure that the poem appeared in print.[3]

'And now', says Sir John Suckling ('To my Friend, Will Davenant, upon his Poem of Madagascar'),

> 'The news in town is, Dav'nant 's come
> From Madagascar, fraught with laurel home.'

Was Davenant's 'laurel' no more than the usual metaphor of poetic fame, or did the success of *Madagascar*, supplementing the poet's activities as writer of masques and entertainments, furnish the occasion for some sort of official recognition as poet laureate? Davenant's patent (December 13, 1638) is substantially the same as Jonson's, or indeed any other royal pension granted for services performed (see Appendix IV). The circumstances, moreover, were practically the same. Jonson had been writing masques which entertained the court. So had Davenant. Those who have fixed upon this pension as an appointment to the laureateship assume, first that Jonson had held such an appointment, and second that after waiting (for no assignable cause) sixteen months after Jonson's death, the court thus installed Davenant in the office. We have seen that no such office was created by the court in Jonson's time. It is equally evident that the document does not 'appoint' Davenant to anything, but Davenant had just completed, with Inigo Jones's assistance, the most gorgeous

[1] *Cal. State Papers, Dom.*, 1636–7, p. 505. [2] Ibid., 1637, p. 82.

[3] According to the *D. N. B.* (*Davenant*, vol. xiv, p. 103) the first edition of *Madagascar with Other Poems* appeared in 1635. As Prince Rupert had not come to England at that time, and as the Madagascar project was not thought of till 1637, one might suppose that the date 1635 would have given the biographer pause. Incidentally one of the 'other poems' is a tribute to Dr. Duppa 'in acknowledgement for his collection in honor of Ben Jonson's memory'. As Jonson died in 1637, this also would have been premature in 1635. *Madagascar with Other Poems* was entered in the Stationers' Register, March 13, 1638.

masque on record, *Britannia Triumphans*, and the pension was a natural and timely reward for that and like 'services heretofore done'.

It must be emphasized that there is not a particle of documentary evidence or of unofficial contemporary evidence of Davenant's appointment. The significant feature of the whole matter is that such evidence as exists comes after the Restoration, at the time when Dryden's formal appointment had given official status to the position. It was natural then that Dryden's traditional predecessors, Jonson and Davenant, should have been assumed to have had more than a *succès d'estime* as laureates, and that Aubrey and Wood, the principal, indeed virtually the only, authorities for it, should have taken such an appointment for granted. In the absence of any documentary evidence, and in the light of the fact that no edition of Davenant's plays, masques, or poems published in the years immediately following the traditional date of his appointment prints the title after the author's name, we must assume that, as far as the court was concerned, Davenant was poet laureate only by tacit sanction, not by any sort of formal appointment.

On the other hand, there is reason to believe that the unofficial and popular conception of the office and title which had developed during Jonson's life, did definitely crystallize in the time of Davenant. Reference has already been made to the inference which may be drawn from Suckling's *Session of the Poets*. If this satire may be taken as evidence that there was talk about the matter as Jonson's life was drawing to a close, further confirmation may be found in the fact that the post-Restoration tradition is far more explicit in Davenant's case than in Jonson's. Aubrey gives no date at which Jonson was 'appointed', but does give such a date for Davenant. Nor does he connect Davenant's appointment with the pension of 1638. He evidently assumes that Jonson held the office, and that at his death Davenant received it. An anecdote which Aubrey quotes as from 'A. D. 1637', refers to 'Will Davenant, Poet Laureate, not then knighted', and elsewhere Aubrey declares that 'after Ben Jonson's death, (Davenant) was made Poet Laureate'.[1] On May 19, 1668, Aubrey writes to Wood: 'Sir William was Poet Laureate, and Mr. John Dryden hath his place.'[2] Anthony Wood, who takes his facts from Aubrey, says: 'After the death of Ben Jonson (Davenant) was created Poet Laureat, *an.* 1637.'[3]

The Folio of Davenant's works, published in 1673, displays as a frontispiece the poet's head, encircled by the laurel wreath, and

[1] *Lives*, ed. Clark, i. 205.
[2] Ibid. i. 209.
[3] *Athenae*, ed. Bliss, iii, col. 804.

the publisher, Herringman, who describes himself as Davenant's friend, writes: 'My Author was Poet Laureat to two Great Kings.' Similar testimony is borne in 1691 by Langbaine,[1] who, it may be noted, nowhere refers to Jonson as poet laureate.

The explicitness of this tradition gives some basis for the belief that Davenant enjoyed a popular, and perhaps also a quasi-official, recognition as laureate from 1637 to the downfall of the monarchy, and that the idea that such an officer was a proper part of the official household took definite shape at this period.

With the fall of the monarchy, this more or less anomalous office disappeared, along with the rest of the court paraphernalia. The court-poet took up arms for his royal master, was made Lieutenant-General of Ordnance, and was knighted at the siege of Gloucester.[2] It is curious to find him writing in this year a *New Year's Gift to the Queen*, the thin-spun conceits and artificial gallantries of which are untouched by the awful menace of the times. In the following year Davenant shared the queen's exile to France, continuing his poetical activities at her mimic court, and acting as her emissary to Charles in the effort to persuade the king to adopt the Catholic faith. Davenant's tactless execution of his mission and the sound rating which the king gave him, 'a sharper reprehension than he did ever towards any other man', are described by Clarendon[3] in terms which do not enhance our respect for the abilities of the courtier-poet.

The remaining years of the Cromwellian period the poet spent partly in exile in France, partly in English prisons. A rather dubious tradition ascribes to Milton the rescue of Davenant from execution as a Royalist. Meanwhile the poet wrote his masterpiece, *Gondibert*, which Hobbes somewhat heavily admired, and which Denham 'vindicated' in a clever satire.

At the Restoration Davenant was prompt to reassert his claim to recognition as the court poet. The *Poem upon His Sacred Majesty's Most Happy Return to His Dominions*, whose metre follows the couplet fashion of the times, is a portentous piece of writing which requires more patience for its perusal than Charles probably possessed. Not less bulky is the *Poem to the King's Most Sacred Majesty*, which soon followed. It is at once an elaborate argument in favour

[1] *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets*, Lond., 1691, p. 72.

[2] 'Davenant the Poet was also at this siege and received here the honor of knighthood, which, if he deserved no more for his chivalry than he did for his poetry, was a dubbing thrown away.'—Oldmixon, *History of England*, ii. 235.

[3] *History of the Rebellion*, ed. Macray, iv. 206.

of the royal policy toward the Puritans, and an appeal on behalf of the poet whose

> Heat is spent which did maintain my bays,
> Spent early in your God-like Father's praise.

This appeal certainly did not bear fruit in any official confirmation of his traditional post as poet laureate. A careful examination of the Pells Issue Books from 1660 to 1668 shows that Charles II did not even continue the pension granted to Davenant by Charles I. Nor do the State Papers afford the slightest evidence that Davenant held any office or drew any pension during that period. For example, the Calendar of State Papers for 1661 contains four references to Davenant in connexion with theatre licences, but none in any other connexion. The same volume contains references to one hundred and forty-two officers of the king's household, but there is no mention of a 'poet laureate'.

Meanwhile, though the court did not see fit to pension Davenant, and though there seems to have been no official patent or other document confirming him in his office, it is clear that he was tacitly recognized by the court, and explicitly recognized by the public, as holding the office. Official recognition is shown by the warrant, issued six days after Davenant's death, 'for a grant to John Dryden of the Office of Poet Laureate, void by the death of Sir William Davenant'.[1] Public recognition is illustrated by such contemporary references as that of Aubrey, already quoted, and by the casual allusions in the literature of the time.[2]

Charles II rejoiced to restore all the complicated paraphernalia which had contributed to the splendour of his father's court. But the hiatus had been too complete for the antiquaries to discriminate narrowly between what had existed officially and what had been only tacitly recognized.[3] As long as Davenant lived his official capacity was taken for granted. When he died, the office which he had traditionally held was at last officially confirmed and authorized by the court, in the appointment of his successor, John Dryden.

[1] *Cal. State Papers, Dom.*, 1667–8, viii. 341.

[2] For example, in an imitation of Suckling's *Session of the Poets*, entitled 'The Session of the Poets, to the Tune of Cock Laurel' (*Poems on State Affairs*, sixth ed., Lond., 1716, p. 206), Davenant is called '*The Laureate*' (title italicised in the poem), and asserts his claim to be 'Steward of Apollo's Court'. A reference to William Killigrew's *Celyndra*, and the implication that Davenant was still alive when the poem was written, fix the date of composition between 1665 and 1668. It is probable that the imminence of the necessity of appointing a Laureate (in this case, as it turned out, Dryden) furnished the occasion for this poem, just as similar circumstances furnished the occasion for Suckling's *Session*.

[3] The confusion is well illustrated by Dryden's patent of 1670 with its wholly unauthenticated list of former laureates and historiographers.

VI

THE LAUREATESHIP: DRYDEN, SHADWELL, AND TATE

Kings make their poets whom themselves think fit.
Dryden, *Prologue to the University of Oxford* (1673).

The official laureateship properly begins with the appointment of John Dryden. The precise date of this appointment is a matter of importance, not merely because it marks the beginning of the office, but also because of a curious misunderstanding which has prevailed concerning it among Dryden's biographers. This misunderstanding has arisen from a confusion of the date of his appointment to the laureateship with the date of his subsequent appointment to the post of historiographer royal.

Early biographers of Dryden (among them Dr. Johnson) apparently took it for granted that the laureateship was conferred upon Dryden immediately upon the death of Davenant, and, therefore, gave 1668 as the date of the appointment. Malone, however, makes the following statement: 'All the biographers of Dryden have said that on the death of Davenant in 1668 he was appointed poet laureate. But it appears from his Letters Patent, a copy of which will be found in the Appendix, that he did not obtain the laurel till August 18th, 1670.'[1] Accordingly, Malone prints in the Appendix an official document of the above date, appointing 'the said John Dryden our Poet Laureat and Historiographer Royal'. Malone adds, with reference to Dryden's degree of M.A.: 'Sir William Davenant died in April, 1668, about two months before Dryden received this degree. It should seem, therefore, that he sought this literary decoration, *honoris causa*, to add somewhat to his pretensions, while he was soliciting to be appointed Poet Laureat and Historiographer Royal; though he did not obtain those offices till two years afterwards.'[2]

Scott took Malone's word for it, closely paraphrased Malone's statement, and reprinted the official document.

When Mr. Saintsbury edited Scott's Dryden, he just missed getting the facts. He annotates Scott's statement: 'This is the correct date

[1] Dryden, *Works*, ed. Malone, London, 1800, vol. i, p. 87.
[2] Vol. i, p. 556.

of the patent. There is, however, in the Record Office an instruction for the preparation of a bill for the purpose, dated April 13.' As the patent is dated August 18, 1670, and as Mr. Saintsbury gives the day and month but not the year of the 'Instruction', the implication is, of course, that the 'Instruction' immediately preceded the patent, in the same year.

Mr. Leslie Stephen, in his article on Dryden in *The Dictionary of National Biography*, in turn fell heir to the story: 'In 1670 (Dryden) had the more solid appointments of poet laureate and historiographer. . . . Davenant, who died in 1668, was his predecessor in the first, and James Howell, who died in 1666, in the last appointment. The office was now joined in one patent, with a salary of £200 a year and a butt of canary wine. Dryden was also to have the two years' arrears since Davenant's death.'

It might well have aroused the wonder of Malone and his successors that a lapse of two years should occur between the death of Davenant and the appointment of Dryden to the office. Dryden possessed a considerable degree of political influence, and he had recently published his *Annus Mirabilis*, a poem which manifested his peculiar fitness for laureate honours. There was no rival candidate whose claims might have delayed the decision of the court, and yet, from the time of Malone to the present,[1] the editors and biographers of Dryden have taken the hiatus for granted, and have assumed that the patent of 1670 was the first official recognition of Dryden as poet laureate.

The truth is that the Government, instead of dallying with the matter for two years after Davenant's death, issued, on April 13, 1668, precisely six days after the death of the former laureate, a 'warrant for a grant to John Dryden of the Office of Poet Laureate, void by the death of Sir William Davenant'.[2] Nor was this warrant an official secret, for on May 19, 1668, Aubrey writes to Anthony Wood: 'Sir William was Poet Laureate, and Mr. John Dryden hath his place.'[3]

The patent of August 18, 1670, was evidently issued because at that time, and not till then, the office of historiographer royal was

[1] Sir A. W. Ward (article on Dryden, *Camb. Hist. Lit.*, viii. 34) is the only exception. He, however, reverses the mistake by giving 1668 as the date of Dryden's appointment to both offices. There is no evidence that the appointment of Dryden as historiographer royal was thought of in 1668.

[2] *Cal. State Papers, Dom.*, 1667–8, vol. viii, p. 341.

[3] Aubrey's *Lives*, Oxford, 1898, i. 209.

combined with the poet laureateship, and the patent served to confer the one and to confirm the other.[1]

'In consideracõn', it reads, 'of the many good and acceptable services by John Dryden master of Arts and eldest sonne of Erasmus Dryden of Tichmarsh in the County of Northton Esquire to vs heretofore done and performed, and takeing notice of the learneing & eminent abilityes of him the said John Dryden and of his great Witt and elegant Style both in Verse & prose and for divers other good causes and consideracons . . . [wee] doe nominate constitute declare and appoint him . . . our Poett Laureatt and Historiographer Royall giveing and granting vnto him . . . the rights Priviledges benefitts and advantages therevnto belonging as fully and amply as Sir Geoffery Chaucer knight Sir John Gower Knight John leland Esquire William Camden Esquire Beniamin Johnson Esquire James Howell Esquire Sir William Davenant Knight or any other person or persons haveing or exerciseing the Place or employment of Poet Laureat or Historiographer or either of them in the time of any of our Royall Progenitors. . . . And for the further & better encouragement of him the said John Dryden diligently to attend the said employment wee are graciously pleased to give and grant vnto the said John Dryden one Annuity or yearely Pencõn of two hundred pounds . . . from the Death of the said Sir William Davenant lately deceased . . . the first payment thereof to begin att the feast of the Nativity of St. John Baptist next & Imediately after the death of the said Sir William Davenant . . . know yee that wee . . . have given . . . the said John Dryden and his assignes one butt or Pype of the best Canary Wyne . . . during our pleasure out of our Store of Wynes yearely.'[2]

The patent of 1670 fixes the emolument for the two offices at a pension of £200 and a butt of canary. The significance of the pension seems to have escaped notice, and indeed the whole history of Dryden's pensions has been involved in confusion. The subject deserves examination, both for its own sake, and because of its bearing on the subsequent history of the laureateship.

The £200 which Dryden received by the letters patent of 1670 was nominally for his dual activities as historiographer and poet. The butt of sack is, it is true, a reminder of Ben Jonson, who is named in

[1] It is significant of the anomalousness of the laureateship at this transition period that Dryden should have held the office for two years without a confirmatory patent, and that when a patent was issued for the conjoined offices, the pension named therein should have been made payable from *Davenant's* death, in spite of the facts (1) that Davenant had received no pension from Charles II; (2) that if Davenant's pension from Charles I had been continued by Charles II, it would have been £100, not £200.

[2] Patent Rolls, 21 Charles II, No. 3119, No. 6.

the patent as one of Dryden's predecessors, but the amount of the pension has no relation to the laureate tradition. As we have seen, Davenant had had no pension from Charles II, and Dryden was given no pension as poet laureate when (April 13, 1668) he was appointed to succeed Davenant. We know, in fact, that Dryden received no pension for the ensuing two and one-half years, for in the Treasury Books for 1671[1] is a 'warrant for £500 to John Dryden, M.A., His Majesty's Poet Laureate and Historiographer Royal in full of what is grown due on his pension . . . payable from the Feast of St. John Baptist next after the death of Sir William Davenant'.

Meanwhile, the post of historiographer royal had been added to the unremunerative laureateship, and for the position of historiographer, *as a salaried office*, there was an immediate precedent.

In 1661, James Howell had had the office virtually created (or re-created) for him, as a result of his plea to Charles II that 'among the prudentst and best policed nations, there is a Minister of State appointed and qualified with the title of Historiographer Generall'. In February of that year, Howell was appointed with a donation of £200 'as his Majesty's free gift',[2] and upon his death in 1666 no successor was appointed. Consequently when the king appointed Dryden historiographer, the amount which had previously attached to that office was renewed to Dryden, and since he had already held an office under the crown for two years without emolument, the pension was, six months later,[3] made retroactive to the date of his appointment as laureate.

In addition to this pension, which students of Dryden, without inquiring why it should have been fixed at that figure, have described as 'the salary of the laureateship',[4] or merely as the salary of the two positions,[5] a later grant of £100 a year was made to Dryden. It was this later grant which Macaulay, mistaking a tardy renewal of it by James II for a first bestowal, cited as a proof of venal apostasy

[1] Vol. iii, p. 772.
[2] *Familiar Letters of James Howell*, ed. Jacobs, ii. 687.
[3] i. e. in the Treasury Warrant of 1671, already cited.
[4] Robert Bell, *Poetical Works of John Dryden*, i. 57.
[5] 'These two positions yielded him a salary of two hundred pounds a year, to which a further pension of one hundred pounds was subsequently added.' G. R. Noyes, *Poetical Works of John Dryden*, p. xxi. Sir A. W. Ward (article on Dryden, *Cam. Hist. Lit.*, viii. 43) adds another blunder: 'Neither the *three hundred* a year due to the poet laureate, nor an additional pension of one hundred (granted some time before 1679) was paid with any approach to regularity.'

on the part of Dryden.[1] But there is a Treasury warrant of May 6, 1684, directing the payment to Dryden of part of arrears since 1680 on a pension of £200 a year, and of arrears since the same date on 'an additionall Annuity' of £100 a year.[2] There is, further, a treasury warrant for January 5, 1679, for a quarter payment to Dryden on a pension of £100.

Mr. Saintsbury, who cites these warrants,[3] adds: 'It will be seen from this that independently of the appointment of the laureateship, Dryden had in or before the year 1679 received an additional pension of £100 a year', but to describe this as 'independent of the appointment of the laureateship' is to neglect the significance of the *amount* in this case, precisely as the significance of the *amount* of the previous pension has been neglected. Jonson and Davenant, who, after the Restoration, came to be looked upon as official laureates, were known to have received, each, a pension of £100, coincidently, as was supposed, with their 'appointment'. After the Restoration, Davenant had had, apparently, to content himself with his theatrical holdings, but certainly by 1679, and probably several years before that date, Charles must have been tactfully reminded of the pension anciently belonging to the traditional laureateship, and accordingly added the £100 to Dryden's income.

Moreover, these two amounts, £200 for the post of historiographer royal, £100 for the laureateship, continued to be the distinctive perquisites of the two offices. When Dryden lost both positions in 1688, they were passed on to Shadwell. But when Shadwell died, two warrants were issued on the same day—December 8, 1691–2:

I. 'Warrant to the Attorney or Solicitor General to prepare a bill constituting Thomas Rymer, Esq., Historiographer Royal in the place

[1] 'Finding that, if he continued to call himself a Protestant, his services would be overlooked, he declared himself a Papist. The king's parsimony immediately relaxed. Dryden was gratified with a pension of a hundred pounds a year, and was employed to defend his new religion both in prose and verse.'—*Hist. Eng.* ii. 456.

[2] This warrant of 1684 was the immediate consequence of an appeal made by Dryden to Laurence Hyde, Earl of Rochester and First Lord of the Treasury, for 'some small employment' and in the meantime 'a gracious and speedy answer to my present request of half a year's pension for my necessities'. ''Tis enough', Dryden adds, in words that have been often quoted, 'for one age to have neglected Mr. Cowley and starved Mr. Butler.' In addition to the warrant, Dryden's other appeal for 'some small employment' was granted by his appointment as Collector of Customs for the port of London.

[3] Scott-Saintsbury, *Dryden*, i. 248–9, *n*. They were first noted by Bell, *Poetical Works of John Dryden*, i. 56.

of Thomas Shadwell, deceased, with the salary of 200 l. per annum, payable quarterly, to commence from Michaelmas last past.'

II. 'Warrant to the same to prepare a bill constituting Nahum Tate, Esq., poet laureate, in the place of Thomas Shadwell, deceased, with the yearly fee of 100 l. payable quarterly at the Exchequer, together with a butt or pipe of Canary wine every Christmas.'[1]

Concerning the combination of the offices of laureate and historiographer, it need only be noted here that the precedent for it dates back to Petrarch whose diploma as poet laureate was conferred upon him in consideration of 'his excellence in the arts of poetry and history', and that an English precedent is found in the appointment of Bernard Andreas as poet laureate and historiographer royal to Henry VII.[2]

There was ample and interesting precedent for the inclusion of the butt of wine. It will be remembered that Henry III granted a *dolium* or pipe of wine to *Magistro Ricardo, citharistae regis*, and another *dolium* to Beatrice, the harper's wife. As for Henry's *versificator regis*, Henri d'Avranches, who can fairly lay claim to being the first of poets laureate in England, we recall that he received a grant for life of 'two tuns of the King's wines, which are in the keeping of the Chamberlain of London, to wit, a tun of vintage and a tun of rack'. Chaucer, too, received his 'daily grant of a pitcher of wine', at the hands of Edward III, and though this was a perquisite of his services as an esquire of the household rather than as a poet, it was carefully recorded by his early editors, and became associated with his name. Professor Lounsbury is even of the opinion that the tradition that Chaucer was an official poet laureate 'probably took its rise from the grant made to him in 1374 of a daily pitcher of wine',[3] but it has already been pointed out that that tradition had ampler reasons for its existence. And, in any event, as Jonson was supposed to have held the office, the 'terse of Canary Spanish wyne' would have furnished ample precedent for the grant to Dryden in the letters patent of 1670. James II, while he continued Dryden's pension, carefully directed that the picturesque perquisite be omitted.[4]

[1] *Cal. State Papers, Dom.*, 1691–2, p. 579. It is interesting to note by the way that the historiographer's emolument is called a 'salary', and the laureate's a 'fee'.

[2] See chapter iii.

[3] *Studies in Chaucer*, i. 174.

[4] *Treasury Letter Book* of 1685. First noted by Macaulay, whose comment on King James's attitude toward such matters is worth quoting in this connexion: 'From the day of his accession, he set himself to make small economical reforms, such as bring on a government the reproach of meanness, without producing any perceptible relief to the finances.'

So much for 'sack and pension'. In what ways and to what extent, it may now be asked, was Dryden 'obliged' by these perquisites? 'There is little doubt (though Mr. Christie thinks otherwise),' says Mr. Saintsbury [1] (the observation is suggested to him by the fact that Crowne, instead of Dryden, was entrusted with the composition of *Calisto*), 'that one of the chief functions of the poet laureate was to compose masques and such like pieces to be acted by the court; indeed, this appears to have been the main regular duty of the office at least in the seventeenth century. That Crowne should have been charged with the composition of *Calisto* was therefore a slight to Dryden.' [2]

In respect to the traditional poets laureate, Jonson and Davenant, and other court-poets such as Daniel and Drayton, this statement is correct. These authors performed the function of 'King's poet' to James I and Charles I by furnishing masques for the entertainment of the court. But the court masque was obsolete in Dryden's time. It had ended with Davenant's *Salmacida Spolia*, 'presented by the King's and Queen's Majesties, at Whitehall on Tuesday, January 21, 1640'. *Calisto, or The Chaste Nymph* (1675) was, it is true, a genuine court masque. It was planned to be acted at court by members of the royal family and household, but it was merely a sporadic revival of an old species. With all his manifold dramatic activities, Dryden had never produced, and indeed, during his entire tenure, never had any other occasion to produce, a 'masque to be acted at court'.[3] If this was the 'main regular duty' of Dryden as poet laureate, he was singularly lax in his performance of it.

Moreover, if Mr. Saintsbury meant to include Dryden's 'operas' in the 'masques and such like pieces', it should be observed that these also were intended for performance in the two patented theatres, and were simply a part of Dryden's professional activities as a playwright. *The Tempest, or The Enchanted Island* was produced for

[1] In a note on the Epilogue to *Calisto, or The Chaste Nymph* (Globe *Dryden*, p. 429), Christie writes as follows: 'It has been generally stated that Rochester's recommendation of Crowne to compose this masque for the court was an intended slight to Dryden, but there seems to be no authority for the statement. Malone says that "a marked slight was shown to Dryden, whose office as Poet Laureat it peculiarly was to compose such entertainments for the court": but the existence of such a right of the Poet Laureat is at least doubtful.'

[2] *Life of Dryden* (*English Men of Letters*), p. 69.

[3] Dryden would hardly have written an epilogue 'intended to have been spoken by the Lady Henrietta Maria Wentworth, when *Calisto* was acted at Court', if he had felt 'slighted' because the play was entrusted to Crowne.

performance in the theatre of which Davenant was manager, before Dryden was appointed to the laureateship. During the tenure of that office, Dryden wrote only two 'operas', *The State of Innocence, or The Fall of Man* (1674) and *Albion and Albanius* (1685). The former, an experiment in 'tagging Milton's verses', was not intended for performance on any stage. The latter, which Saintsbury calls a masque,[1] and which Scott more accurately designates a 'ballad-opera',[2] was, like *The Tempest*, written for the professional stage, and has only such connexion with the court as comes from the fact that it was intended as a compliment to Charles II,[3] but so were many other plays of the day, whether by the laureate or other playwrights. The 'dramatic opera' of *King Arthur* was composed three years after Dryden lost the laureateship.

If the 'main regular duty' of Dryden as poet laureate was 'to compose masques and such like pieces to be acted by the court', we should expect to find some evidence that Dryden performed these duties while he held the office, and of such evidence there is absolutely none. Instead, we find Dryden, before, during, and after the period of his laureateship, going steadily on with his experiments in various types of the drama—comedy, tragi-comedy, tragedy, the heroic play, and 'opera'. King and court were fond of plays, and were frequent attendants at the two professional theatres; but opportunities thus to win the approval of the court were equally open to any other playwright. The only connexion between Dryden's dramatic activities and his position as laureate was the incidental *prestige* which the title gave him.

Mr. Saintsbury's description of the duties of the poet laureate in Dryden's day represents one extreme of opinion. The other extreme is fairly represented by Sir Adolphus Ward in his chapter on Dryden in the *Cambridge History of English Literature*: 'His simultaneous appointments in 1668 as poet laureate and as historiographer royal (for which later post his qualifications, doubtless, were found in *Annus Mirabilis*) imposed no duties "hereafter to be done", nor were any performed by him in either of his official capacities.'[4]

It is true that no duties were formally imposed, but it is not true that none were performed. The question whether Dryden performed

[1] *Dryden*, ed. Scott-Saintsbury, vii. 227, and Mermaid Series, ii. 222.
[2] Ibid. vii. 224.
[3] *Albion and Albanius* was not produced till after Charles's death, and was hastily withdrawn upon the news of Monmouth's arrival at Lyme.
[4] *Cambridge Hist. Lit.* vii. 34.

any duties as historiographer royal does not greatly concern us, but it may be noted in passing that if his 'qualifications' for the position are to be found in *Annus Mirabilis*, it is equally reasonable to accept his translation of Maimbourg's *History of the League*, which was 'translated into English according to His Majesty's Command', as a task executed in fulfilment of his obligation as historiographer royal. The question whether he performed any 'duties' directly ascribable to his position as poet laureate deserves a more thorough examination.

As a pliant panegyrist Dryden had amply demonstrated his ability before his appointment to the laureateship. The *Heroic Stanzas* to the memory of Oliver Cromwell were followed, in less than two years, by *Astræa Redux*, on the 'Happy Restoration' of Charles II. The former had described Cromwell's exploits in vigorous verse, and had declared the Protector to be a perfect, a flawless being.

> Heaven in his portrait shew'd a workman's hand,
> And drew it perfect yet without a shade.

The latter, in verse equally vigorous, condemned the errors of the past—

> Madness the pulpit, faction seiz'd the throne—

and welcomed the return of the golden age:

> Oh times like those alone,
> By Fate reserv'd for great Augustus' throne!
> When the joint growth of arms and arts foreshew
> The world a monarch, and that monarch *You*.

These, with the tribute to the Lord Chancellor, Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, and *Annus Mirabilis*, with its account of England's prowess on land and sea, proclaimed Dryden, not merely as a master of panegyric and pliant enough to put his powers at the disposition of the authority of the moment, but also rarely gifted as a pleader and exponent in verse. Here was not merely an adroit flatterer, but a vigorous advocate, and though Dryden's patent prescribed no 'duties to be done', it is beyond question that the title of laureate was conferred upon him, not as a perfunctory compliment, but to insure these great poetic powers in the service of the king.

It was thus, apparently, that Dryden interpreted his responsibility as laureate, and, during the twenty years in which he held the office, he performed his task of poet-advocate with a ready pen, and

apparently with a perfectly clear conscience. At times he entered the controversial arena with a play. *The Spanish Friar* (1680), a satire on the Roman Catholics, and explicitly dedicated as 'a Protestant play' to 'a Protestant patron', has been thought to reflect a temporary alienation from the court, and an espousal of the cause of the Earl of Shaftesbury, but it is inconceivable, in the light of the fact that *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681), attacking the Earl, followed so hard upon it, that Dryden could have been actuated by any other motive than a desire to further the interests of the king. Two years later appeared *The Duke of Guise*, with a dedication bitterly attacking the Whigs, and with a plot full of unmistakable parallels to the political situation in England. The king's actions in authorizing the arrest of Monmouth and the coincident warrant by the Lord Chamberlain for the performance of *The Duke of Guise* gave to the play all the semblance of a political tract, and the king's subsequent 'command' to Dryden to translate Maimbourg's *History of the League* (1684), which, in the words of Scott, 'may be considered as a sort of illustration of the doctrines laid down in the *Vindication of the Duke of Guise*', served to give the royal *cachet* to all three works.

But such performances as these were only incidental to Dryden's real 'duty' as laureate. That duty was clearly not the production of plays of a political cast, but the composition of poems addressed to the public at large, in which Dryden's great powers of argument and satire should be placed at the service of the king. To these, Dryden eagerly turned. He was professional playwright by necessity; he was poet by instinct, and by the seal of his laureateship. Early in Dryden's career as a dramatist, the authors of *The Rehearsal* had made Mr. Bayes say with unconscious prophecy: 'Since they will not admit of my plays, they shall know what a satirist I am.' Dryden, in fact,

> In a just despair, would quit the stage.

Again, in the dedication of *Aureng-Zebe* (from the prologue to which the foregoing line is quoted), he is even more explicit. He expresses himself as tired of being 'the Sisyphus of the stage.... I never thought myself very fit for an employment where many of my predecessors have excelled me in all kinds'. Instead, he would wish 'to make the world some part of amends for many ill plays, by an heroic poem'. Dryden's own dissatisfaction with his work as a dramatist and sense of his greater powers in another direction were echoed (if not too

kindly) by his satirists. By one of these, for example, he is advised to

> Leave making operas and writing of lyrics;
> Stick to thy talent of bold panegyrics.

His true service as laureate was to be in the field of 'bold panegyrics', which in Dryden's active mind included not only personal tribute, but also argument and defence, and satire upon the king's enemies.

Within these special services of the poet-advocate fall Dryden's two political satires, *Absalom and Achitophel* and *The Medal*, and his two religious poems, *Religio Laici* and *The Hind and the Panther*. The two former are said to have been written at the king's express desire;[1] according to Spence, Charles commanded the poet to end *Absalom and Achitophel* with a paraphrase of the speech before the Oxford parliament. But even without this external evidence, no one could mistake the tenor of *Absalom and Achitophel*. It bears all the marks of an exposition of the king's attitude, conscientiously executed by the king's poet. Referring to the king and Monmouth, who were respectively figured as David and Absalom, Dryden wrote: 'David himself could not be more tender of the young man's life than I would be of his reputation.' The fact also that in *Absalom and Achitophel* Dryden was consciously taking the unpopular side and satirizing a public favourite, serves but to emphasize his rôle as spokesman of the court.

It would be hard to find a more perfect example of *official* poetry—of laureate verse as Dryden interpreted that word—than is afforded by *Absalom and Achitophel*. The extraordinarily delicate task of emphasizing the enormity of Monmouth's *act* in rebelling against the king, and at the same time being as 'tender' of the *man* as David himself would have been, is carried out with consummate skill. The portrayal of the growth of the temptation in Monmouth's mind after he had listened to the insidious words of Shaftesbury is one of the most notable instances of steering through difficult waters that English literature affords. Absalom has to yield to temptation and decide to do a wicked thing—but we must not for a moment think that Absalom himself is wicked. All the while the virtues of the king and his wisdom in wishing that the succession should go to his brother James, rather than to the illegitimate Monmouth, must be kept in mind—and this not so much through comments of the poet *in propria persona*, as through his interpretation of the words or thoughts of the

[1] Tate is the authority in the case of *Absalom and Achitophel*; Spence in the case of *The Medal*.

erring Absalom. Equally skilful is the paraphrase of Charles's speech before the Oxford parliament, with which Dryden concluded the poem. Here, indeed, was a task most proper to the laureateship as Dryden conceived it—to versify, with all needful manipulating and polishing, the very words of his royal master. Here, too, Dryden's artistry is evident in the success with which he assimilates his material to the terms of the allegory.

'The success of this wonderful satire was so great', says Scott, 'that the court had again recourse to the assistance of the author.' The result was *The Medal*, in which Dryden, having already made Shaftesbury one of the objects of his attack in *Absalom and Achitophel*, now concentrates his satire upon him. The 'Epistle to the Whigs' with which Dryden prefaces the poem, is more disdainful of his enemies and self-confident in tone than the preface to *Absalom and Achitophel*, and reflects a growing sense on Dryden's part, not only of his superiority in satire, but also of the invulnerability of his position as spokesman of the court. Supporting him was the authority of the king, an authority which his enemies were quick to recognize. As a contemporary satirist (probably Shadwell) said of him :

> Bayes's crowned muse by sovereign right of satyr
> Without desert can dub a man a traitor ;

and though Dryden doubtless felt that he gave the king's enemies no more than their due, he was not loath to profit by all the opportunities that his 'sovereign right of satyr' gave him.

The two religious poems were not ostensibly written at the instance of the court. In the preface to *Religio Laici* he said : 'I pretend not to make myself a judge of faith in others, but only to make a confession of my own.' And again, in answer to the advice of his 'judicious and learned friend' to omit the criticism on the Athanasian creed : 'I am sensible enough that I had done more *prudently* to have followed his opinion, but then I could not have satisfied myself that I had done honestly not to have written what was my own.' Similarly, and perhaps with an even livelier sense of the need for such a statement, he declared in the preface to *The Hind and the Panther* : 'As for the poem in general, I will only thus far satisfy the reader, that it was neither imposed upon me, nor so much as the subject given me, by any man.' There is no reason to question the literal truth of these statements, but the fact that, in both poems, Dryden fulfilled a political obligation is none the less obvious.

Into the discussion of the ethics of Dryden's sudden change of religion, the present writer has no desire to enter, but the bearing of both these poems upon Dryden's function as official spokesman of the court does immediately concern us, and with this the explanation —if not the justification—of his course is closely connected. Dryden was not a man of deep and abiding convictions; or rather, he seems to have had one deep and abiding conviction—his respect for constituted authority. What he would have done by instinct, the laureateship confirmed him in doing, and it was not the pension, but his sense of the responsibilities of his position, which sealed his successive allegiances. It is hard to see how a mere *poseur* or a conscious hypocrite could have written the oft-quoted words from *The Vindication of the Duke of Guise*: 'If I am a mercenary scribbler, the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury best know: I am sure, they have found me no importunate solicitor; for I know my self, I deserved little, and therefore have never desired much. I return that slander with just disdain on my accusers; 'tis for men who have ill consciences to suspect others: I am resolved to stand or fall with the cause of God, my King and Country; never to trouble my self for any railing aspersions which I have not deserved, and to leave it as a portion to my children, that they had a father who durst do his duty, and was neither covetous nor mercenary.'

This sense of the supremacy in all things of the constituted authority enabled Dryden to feel that he was acting according to his conscience in defending the two faiths to which he successively subscribed. It animates alike his declaration of his own faith and his attacks upon the Catholics and 'Fanatics' in *Religio Laici*; and it facilitated his acceptance of Catholicism under a Catholic king, to whom, as to his predecessor, he was poet laureate. His preface to *Religio Laici* condemns the Papists because, according to their creed, they may be absolved from allegiance to a ruler not of their own faith, and are permitted 'when once they shall get power to shake him off . . . to rise against him in rebellion'; and the 'Fanatics' because ''tis to be noted . . . that the doctrines of king-killing and deposing, which have been taken up only by the worst party of the Papists, the most frontless flatterers of the Pope's authority, have been espoused, defended, and are still maintained by the whole body of Nonconformists and Republicans.' And of both Papists and Nonconformists he says: 'We shall all be glad to think them true Englishmen when they obey the king.'

It is on precisely the same grounds that he returns to the attack upon the dissenting sects in *The Hind and the Panther*. Theirs are the doctrines of rebellion—

> Such are their doctrines, such contempt they show
> To Heav'n above and to their prince below.

Their

> pestilential zeal
> Can flourish only in a commonweal.

The Church of England he will not condemn so unsparingly—

> Her faults and virtues lie so mixed that she
> Nor wholly stands condemned, nor wholly free ;

but she was herself born of a recent schism—

> A second century not half way run
> Since the new honors of her blood begun.

Catholicism is of an authority incomparably more ancient, and with that ancient ecclesiastical authority it now combines the authority of the king himself.

> God's and King's rebels have the same good cause
> To trample down divine and human laws ;
> Both would be called reformers, and their hate
> Alike destructive both to Church and State.

If the successor of Charles II had been a Protestant, Dryden would in all probability have remained a Protestant, and would have continued to defend his king's faith and his own. As it was, in *The Hind and the Panther*, even though the writing of it ' had been imposed upon him by no man ', he wrote, as the spokesman of a Catholic king, of the Church of England—

> Then, like her injured Lion,[1] let me speak ;
> He cannot bend her and he would not break.

If also he wrote with greater power and conviction in *The Hind and the Panther* than in *Religio Laici* (as he unquestionably did) it is because he had found a more natural fold in the faith whose very essence is submission to authority.

It is in these four poems, then, that Dryden performed his proper service as laureate to Charles II and James II. The significance of the laureateship, as it took shape in these first twenty years of its existence, as a recognized office of the court, was due in part to the conditions of the time, and in part to the personality of the man who

[1] King James.

held the office. The news-letter, which since the time of Charles I had struggled to assert itself as a medium of political influence, was kept under severe restrictions. In the reign of James II, Jeffreys even suppressed coffee-houses that 'dealt in news-letters'.[1] But the way which was closed to the news-letter was open to the poet and the pamphleteer. These coffee-houses were the gathering-places, not merely for all London, but for all provincial England as well. Here, in the midst of bitter factional strife, public opinion was moulded. Satirical verse was felt to be one of the most important, if not the most important, means of moulding that opinion. In this field Dryden commanded such a hearing as no other poet could aspire to.[2]

Thus it was that the first official poet laureate became the accredited spokesman of the two kings under whom he served, ready to invoke his muse in their behalf, whether the issue were religious or political. When, upon the death of James II and accession of the Prince of Orange, he lost both the laureateship and the position of historiographer royal, he quietly returned to his private occupation as a writer of plays. Upon the newly constituted authority he made no attack, but the way in which that authority had been constituted, subversive as it was of the principle of absolute monarchy, was not Dryden's way, and neither his political creed nor the religious faith to which he had honestly come, made it possible for him to put his powers at the service of the new monarch.

In this discussion of Dryden's rôle as poet laureate, no reference has been made to the two poems of his which are ordinarily cited as typical of the laureate function. *Threnodia Augustalis*, 'a funeral-Pindaric poem, sacred to the happy memory of King Charles II' (1685), and *Britannia Rediviva*, 'a poem on the Prince, born on the tenth of June, 1688', are purely panegyric in tone, and seem to the present writer incidental to Dryden's laureateship rather than characteristic of it. The *Threnodia* contains serious faults of taste, and *Britannia Rediviva* is extravagant even beyond the measure of an age given to extravagant adulation. They are of the slightest intrinsic interest, but in the history of the laureateship they have at least an anticipative value. The rôle of the laureate as poet-advocate and

[1] Cf. J. B. Williams, 'The Beginnings of English Journalism' (*Cambridge Hist. Lit.* vii. 365 *n.*)

[2] 'Of this poem (*Absalom and Achitophel*), in which personal satire was applied to the support of public principles, the reception was eager, and the sale so large, that my father, an old bookseller, told me, he had not known it equalled but by Sacheverell's trial' (Johnson, *Life of Dryden*).

spokesman of the court began with Dryden and ended with Dryden. With Dryden's powers of argument and invective no longer at the service of the court, there was no one to play the part. Had his deposition occurred a few years later, a trenchant satirist, a genuine poet, and a great dramatist would have been lineal to the throne;[1] but in 1689 Congreve was an unknown youth of eighteen, and the laurel passed to one who could do little more than imitate the cheap adulation of the *Threnodia* and *Britannia Rediviva*.

THOMAS SHADWELL

THE choice of Thomas Shadwell as Dryden's successor in the laureateship and the post of historiographer royal must have impressed Shadwell's admirers as a notable instance of poetic justice. The careers of the two men had been closely interwoven. From the outset Shadwell's unqualified admiration for Ben Jonson, whom, he says in his preface to *The Sullen Lovers*, 'I think all dramatick poets ought to imitate', had brought him into argument with Dryden. For a while the two remained on friendly terms. They co-operated (in conjunction with Crowne) in an attack on Settle's *Empress of Morocco* (1674); Dryden contributed a prologue to Shadwell's *True Widow* in 1679; and in 1682 we find their names coupled in a pamphlet entitled 'A Modest Vindication of the Earl of Shaftesbury . . . concerning his being elected King of Poland', in which Dryden is satirically represented as of Shaftesbury's party, and one of the officers of the new Polish king: 'Jean Drydenurtzig, our poet laureat, for writing panegyrics upon Oliver Cromwell and libels against his present master, King Charles II of England; Tom Shadworiski, his deputy.'[2] Shadwell even refers to Dryden on one occasion (preface to *The Humourists*, 1671) as his 'particular friend', but only with a view to taking issue with him once more on the merits of Ben Jonson.

The actual break was on political, not literary grounds. When

[1] O that your Brows my Lawrel had sustain'd,
Well had I been depos'd, if you had reign'd!
The Father had descended for the Son,
For only You are lineal to the Throne.
Dryden, 'To my dear Friend, Mr. Congreve, on his Comedy call'd *The Double Dealer*' (1693).

[2] *Somers Tracts*, 1812, viii. 317. There was a rumour that Shaftesbury had actually been proposed for the throne of Poland. Hence Dryden's reference to 'the *Polish* medal' in his poem, *The Medal*.

Dryden's second satire on Shaftesbury, *The Medal*, with its prefatory 'Epistle to the Whigs', appeared in 1682, Shadwell replied with *The Medal of John Bayes: A Satyr against Folly and Knavery*, with a prefatory 'Epistle to the Tories'.[1] *The Medal of John Bayes* is not great satire, and it may be wondered why Dryden, whose high position and partisan writings had made him the target for many attacks, should have been so greatly provoked by Shadwell's assault. But the reason is not far to seek. In addition to an occasional telling phrase—such as dubbing the laureate 'a cherry-cheeked dunce of fifty-three'—Shadwell gathers up everything that anybody had ever said against Dryden (and much that nobody else had ever thought of) and delivers it as plain, unvarnished fact. As far as imaginative quality goes, Shadwell's arraignment might as well have been in prose, but the rhymed couplets, although they lack the barb of more finished satire, serve to drive his points home.

Dryden is 'hired to lie and libel' in the service of the Tories; in society he is 'a standing jest', as dramatist and poet an unscrupulous plagiarist, usurping the sovereign power and pillaging the very poets whom he lords it over. He is reminded of his beating in Rose Alley; of the fact that the very lords before whom he grovels are neglecting to pay his pension; that he writes prefaces to books for meat and drink; that he is a fawning parasite, and in turn false to those on whom he has fawned; that he is a turncoat:

> Now, farewell, wretched mercenary Bayes,
> Who the King libell'd, and did Cromwell praise.
> Farewell, abandon'd Rascal! only fit
> To be abus'd by thy own scurrilous wit—
> Which thou wouldst do, and for a moderate sum,
> Answer thy Medal and thy Absalom.

Indeed Shadwell builded better than he knew, for *The Hind and the Panther* was still in the unforeseen future when Shadwell wrote

> Go, abject Bayes! and act thy slavish part;
> Fawn on those Popish knaves whose knave thou art.

The sheer weight and brutality of the attack distinguished it from the other retorts, such as Samuel Pordage's *The Medal Reversed*; and in *Mac Flecknoe, or a Satyr upon the True Blue Protestant Poet, T. S.*,

[1] Two other verse-satires of this same year, 'The Tory Poets' and 'A Satyr to His Muse by the Author of *Absalom and Achitophel*', in both of which Dryden is attacked, have been ascribed to Shadwell. The ascription in neither case seems to me probable. Neither of the poems has the crude force of *The Medal of John Bayes*.

Dryden singles Shadwell out to be the scape-goat. His plagiarism, his immorality, his drunkenness, his 'mountain-belly', his 'tun of man' with only a 'kilderkin of wit', are set forth with a bluntness that vies with Shadwell's own. But Dryden was the master, not the slave, of his material. His creative imagination, scorning the crudity of attack by catalogue, set his victim on the throne of Dullness, the only possible successor to the aged monarch of that realm.

> Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,
> Mature in dulness from his tender years;
> Shadwell alone of all my Sons is he
> Who stands confirm'd in full stupidity. . . .
> All Arguments, but most his Plays, persuade
> That for anointed dulness he was made.

Dryden is said to have thought *Mac Flecknoe* his best work.[1] There is nothing in it to match the picture of Shaftesbury in *Absalom and Achitophel*, but *Mac Flecknoe* does full justice to the cruder theme. Dryden, however, was not yet satisfied, and the passage in the second part of *Absalom and Achitophel*[2] in which Shadwell appears as Og,

> From a treason-tavern rolling home,

bears witness to the persistence of the laureate's antagonism.

Recognizing his inability to meet Dryden's crushing attack, Shadwell withdrew from the contest, and laid aside the weapon of verse-satire.[3] His prose pamphlet, *Some Reflections upon the Pretended Parallel in the Play called The Duke of Guise*, which discusses the intended application of Dryden and Lee's play to the issue of the moment, is mainly an argument along historical lines, and contains but little in the way of personal recrimination. Dryden's reply, the *Vindication* of the Duke of Guise, shows, indeed, less good taste than Shadwell's 'Reflections', for it renews the charge of drunkenness and ridicules Shadwell for his ignorance of Greek and Latin. When at length Shadwell did reply specifically to Dryden's attacks, his retort took the form, honest, if a little *naïve*, of giving to the world a translation (1687) of the tenth satire of Juvenal. 'I was provoked to this first', Shadwell says in his Epistle Dedicatory, 'by the supposed

[1] Spence's *Anecdotes*, ed. Singer, p. 60.

[2] Part ii, ll. 310–509 (containing the attack on Shadwell) are by Dryden. The rest of the second part is by Nahum Tate.

[3] 'The Adress of John D—n Laureat, To His Highness the Prince of Orange', printed in *Poems on Affairs of State*, part iii, 1698, pp. 295–300, is said in the contents to be 'Written by T. Shadwell'. But it is at least six years later than *Mac Flecknoe*, and its authorship is not certain.

author of Mack-Fleckno, who says in another pamphlet that to his knowledge I understand neither Greek nor Latin.' And Shadwell adds with a quaint ingenuousness that rather confirms his right to Flecknoe's throne: 'I might think, I hope without vanity, that the author of Mack-Fleckno reflects more upon himself than me; where he makes Fleckno commend Dulness and choose me for the dullest that ever writ. . . . But sure he goes a little too far in calling me the dullest, and has no more reason for that than for giving me the Irish name of Mack when he knows I never saw Ireland till I was three and twenty-years old, and was there but four months.'

In the war of wits Shadwell was clearly outmatched; but he had only two years to wait before time brought in its revenges. The Revolution deprived Dryden of his offices, and Shadwell was appointed to the laureateship and the post of historiographer royal.

The reasons for the choice are not difficult to discover. It is true that Shadwell was known primarily as a writer of prose comedies. But his predecessor had been a dramatist, and though Dorset's characterization of Shadwell[1] has often been quoted as evidence of the absurdity of the appointment, Shadwell's reputation as a dramatist with his contemporaries was an ample warrant. His first play, produced more than twenty years before, had met with 'extraordinary success',[2] and only a year before his appointment *The Squire of Alsatia* had been the hit of the day, 'no comedy for these many years having filled the theatre so long together'.[3] It is on the strength of this reputation that Langbaine, writing just a year after Shadwell's appointment,[4] describes him as 'a Gentleman whose Dramatick Works are sufficiently known to the World; but especially his Excellent Comedies; which in the Judgment of some Persons, have very deservedly advanced him to the Honour he now enjoys, under the Title of *Poet Laureat* to their present Majesties'.

Shadwell had hastened to celebrate the accession of William and Mary by two poems, *A Congratulatory Poem on His Highness the Prince of Orange, His Coming into England. Written by T. S., a True Lover of His Country* and *A Congratulatory Poem to the Most Illustrious Queen Mary, Upon Her Arrival in England.* In spite of their crude-

[1] 'I will not pretend to determine how great a poet Shadwell may be,' Dorset is quoted as saying, when asked why he had not chosen a better poet, 'but I am sure he is an honest man.'

[2] See Shadwell's preface to *The Sullen Lovers* and *Biog. Dram.* iii. 305.

[3] Preface to *The Squire of Alsatia.*

[4] *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets*, 1691, pp. 442–3.

ness, these poems manifested his readiness to play the part of professional eulogist. Moreover, he had been a staunch Whig through all the vicissitudes of his party,[1] and expected—and no doubt, from the party standpoint, deserved—a reward. Finally—and perhaps most importantly—his patron, the Earl of Dorset, was Lord Chamberlain of the Household.

The relations of Shadwell and Dorset were not those of mere formal literary patronage. As early as 1678 Nell Gwyn had written: 'My Lord of Dorset appears once in three months, for he drinks ale with Shadwell and Mr. Harris at the Duke's house all day long.'[2] Not long after, there is evidence that Shadwell was in receipt of a private pension, for the *Fourth Report of the Hist. MSS. Comm.* (p. 280) notes a letter of Thomas Shadwell to the Earl of Dorset of January 24, 1682/3, 'asking for last Christmas quarter of his pension'. Again, just before the overthrow of James II, Shadwell says in dedicating *The Squire of Alsatia* to the Earl of Dorset:

'I having had the Honour to have liv'd so many Years in your Lordship's Favour, and to have been always exceedingly oblig'd by Your Lordship, ought to be glad of any opportunity of publishing my Gratitude. And the offering this Comedy to your Lordship may not perhaps be thought an improper Occasion of doing it; For the first Act of it was written at *Copt-Hall*. . . . I must acknowledge my self infinitely obliged to your Lordship every way; but particularly, that I have the Freedom of being receiv'd as one of Your Family at *Copt-Hall*; where not only the Excellence of the Air, and Regularity of living contribute to my Health, but I have the Honour of enjoying the Conversation which in all the World I would chuse.'

Measured by the standard of the times, the appointment of Shadwell was therefore natural, on both literary and personal grounds.

Of the precise date of Shadwell's appointment there appears to be no record. The *Calendar of State Papers* for 1689 contains no reference to it, nor does the *London Gazette* mention Shadwell in the long lists of appointments immediately following William's accession. But Dorset was appointed Lord Chamberlain on February 14, 1688/9, and less than three months later the *Gazette* of May 27 advertised the publication of *Bury Fair, a Comedy as it is acted by His Majesties Servants, written by Tho. Shadwell.*[3] In dedicating this quarto to

[1] 'I never could recant in the worst of times, when my ruin was designed and my life was sought' (Preface to *Bury Fair*, 1689).

[2] *Notes and Queries*, fourth series, vii. 3.

[3] *Term. Cat.*, ed. Arber, ii. 275, gives the date of publication as June 1689.

'Charles, Earl of Dorset, Lord Chamberlain to His Majesty', Shadwell acknowledges 'the late great honour you have done me in making me the King's servant'.[1] The date of Shadwell's appointment falls, therefore, between February 14 and May 27, 1689,[2] and the fact that the ode for Queen Mary's birthday on April 30, 1689, was written by Shadwell, suggests that the appointment had taken place prior to that date.

The Buckingham Palace MS. of Purcell's compositions of court music for various occasions contains 'An Ode on the Queen's Birthday Sung before their Majesties at Whitehal, by Tho. Shadwell'. Although this particular ode is undated, the chronological arrangement of the MS. and the existence of Odes for Queen Mary's Birthday for all the other years of her reign, fix the date of this ode as 1689.[3]

[1] An incident of the closing year of Shadwell's life may be noted in this connexion, as evidence that he did not use his intimacy with Dorset solely for selfish ends. On January 19, 1691/2, Shadwell wrote to Dorset asking him to order *The Innocent Impostors* to be the next new play to be acted. He had it appears already made suggestions at the theatre, but 'Thomas Davenant has with a great slight turned him off, and says he will trouble himself no more about the Play'. He asks Dorset to favour the author of the play, and complains of priority being given to D'Urfey's play and a play by Dryden (*Hist. MSS. Comm., 4th Report*, pp. 280–1). *The Innocent Impostors*, which *D. N. B.* ('Shadwell', li. 342) says 'cannot be traced', is *The Rape, or the Innocent Impostors*, which was duly produced at the Theatre Royal with an epilogue by Shadwell himself and with Betterton and Mrs. Bracegirdle in the leading parts. The author of the play was the young Nicholas Brady, who was afterwards to co-operate with Nahum Tate (Shadwell's successor in the laureateship) in producing the metrical version of the Psalms. Shadwell sent a manuscript copy of the play to Dorset on May 2, 1692 (*Hist. MSS. Comm., 4th Report*, p. 281), and it was published in quarto, with an effusive dedication to Dorset, in June 1692 (*Term. Cat.*, ed. Arber, ii. 411). Upon Shadwell's death Brady, then in London as minister of the Church of St. Catherine Cree, preached a laudatory funeral sermon (printed in 1693) acknowledging that he had received from Shadwell 'all the marks of a true affection'.

[2] Shadwell's patent (Patent Rolls, 1 William and Mary, part 5, No. 3329) was drawn up on August 29. A certain amount of delay between the issue of a warrant for an appointment and the drawing up of the patent was not uncommon, especially when, as in the successive appointments to the laureateship, the pension was made payable from the death of the predecessor. The appointment is made 'in consideration of the many good and acceptable services . . . and taking notice of the Learning and Eminent Abilities of the said Tho. Shadwell'. Follows, as in Dryden's patent, the list of traditional laureates. The pension is given as three hundred pounds, and also 'one Butt or Pype of the best Canary Wyne yearely'.

[3] See the *Works of Henry Purcell*, vol. xi, Birthday Odes for Queen Mary, part 1, i. and 1. The words of the ode appear also in *Poems on Affairs of State. The Second Part*, 1697, where they are ascribed to Shadwell.

There are three stanzas and a chorus, of which the first stanza and the chorus will suffice as an example.

Now does the glorious Day appear,
The mightiest Day of all the Year,
Not anyone such joy could bring,
Not that which ushers in the Spring.
That of ensuing Plenty hopes does give,
This did the hope of Liberty retrieve ;
This does our Fertile Isle with Glory Crown,
And all the Fruits it yields we now can call our own.
On this blest day was our Restorer born,
Farr above all let this the Kalendar Adorn.
Now, now with our united Voice
Let us aloud proclaim our Joys ;
Io Triumphe *let us sing*
And make Heav'ns mighty concave ring.

It should be noted that Shadwell's authorship of this ode is only presumptive evidence of his having at that time been appointed laureate. The obligations of the office were not clearly defined at this period. D'Urfey wrote the queen's birthday ode performed on April 30, 1690; the ode for the ensuing year is probably but not certainly by Shadwell, and the ode for 1692 (although Shadwell did not die until November of that year) was by Sir Charles Sedley.

Nor was the task of writing King's Birthday Odes and New Year's Odes yet definitely imposed upon the laureate. The theory that it was Shadwell who commenced the composition of regular Anniversary Odes is not sustained by the facts. Although Shadwell was laureate for four years he wrote only one Birthday Ode for the King (1689) and one New Year's Ode (1692). There is no reason to believe that at this period the celebration of the king's birthday was necessarily and invariably attended by the performance of an ode, set to music. Nor, as we shall see, was Shadwell's successor, Nahum Tate, under any such regular obligation.

The king's birthday was on November 4, and on the first of these anniversaries after his accession the following ode was duly performed at court.

ODE

On the Anniversary of the King's Birth by Tho. Shadwell, Poet Laureat and Historiographer Royal.[1]

Welcome, thrice welcome, this auspicious morn
On which the great Nassau was born,

[1] London, 1690, fol.

Sprung from a mighty race which was designed
For the deliv'rers of mankind.
Illustrious heroes, whose prevailing fates
Raised the distressed to high and mighty states;
And did by that possess more true renown,
Than their Adolphus gained by the Imperial crown.

They cooled the rage, humbled the pride of Spain.
But since, the insolence of France no less
Had brought the States into distress,
But that a precious scion did remain
From that great root, which did the shock sustain
And made them high and mighty once again.
This prince for us was born to make us free
From the most abject slavery.
Thou hast restored our laws their force again;
We still shall conquer on the land by thee;
By thee shall conquer on the main.

But thee a Fate much more sublime attends,
Europe for freedom on thy sword depends;
And thy victorious arms shall tumble down
The savage monster from the Gallick throne;
To this important day we all shall owe,
Oh glorious birth, from which such blest effects shall flow.
(*General chorus of voices and instruments.*)

On this glad day let every voice
And instruments proclaim our joys,
And let all Europe join in the triumphant noise,
Io Triumphe let us sing,
Io Triumphe let us sing,
And let the sound through all the spacious welkin ring.

Thus the prophetic muses say,
And all thy wise and good will pray,
That they long, long, may celebrate this day.
Soon haughty France shall bow, and cozening Rome,
And Britain mistress of the world become;
And from thy wise, thy God-like sway,
Kings learn to reign, and subjects to obey.

The poem with which Shadwell greeted the king on his return from Ireland will show how far he was qualified for the laureate's proper function of celebrating events of national importance. The battle of the Boyne afforded such a theme as, in ancient times, had inspired the Celtic bards and the kings' poets of the wild north. Before the battle had fairly begun, a cannon-ball, fired from a screened position across the river, struck the king's shoulder and brought him down.

The wound was not severe. He remounted, was in the van of the battle all that day, and led the final charge which turned the defeat of the Irish and French into a rout. A rumour that the king had been mortally wounded, preceding the news of the victory, brought joy to the heart of Louis XIV, and reduced London to despair. When at last the whole story was told, the elation in England was the greater for the profound anxiety which had preceded it. To see James dethroned, to welcome the liberator of an oppressed people, to hear that that liberator had been wounded and then to learn that, undaunted by his wound, he had led his men to victory—here was an opportunity which might well have stirred the pulses even of a fairly phlegmatic laureate; but Shadwell's response to the mood of the moment is so dull that either the poet himself or the printer of the folio edition apparently thought it necessary to eke out the inspiration with an unusual abundance of italics and capitals.[1]

> Welcome, thrice Welcome, Sir, from all the Harms,
> The rough *Fatigues*, and threatning Dangers past,
> To your *Britannia*'s and *Maria*'s Arms;
> By each alike with *Eager Joys* embrac'd.
> Both equally did for your *Absence* Mourn,
> And both alike Languish'd for your *Return*.
> For wheresoe're abroad in Camps y' appear,
> We not for Us, but for your *Person* fear.
> In your *Great Breast* so much does *Valour* burn,
> You urge so home, so much your self expose,
> Your Courage does affright your *Friends*, as well as *Foes*.
>
> Your Troops, when charg'd to March by your Command,
> Astonish'd with Prodigious Wonder stand,
> To see the Crowding Bullets fly
> At unregarding Majesty;
> While their *Great Leader* is concern'd no more
> Than at some gentle and refreshing Showr.
> But soon they Recollect, are soon Inspir'd
> To act such Deeds as He alone can teach:
> By his unparallel'd Example fir'd,

[1] When letters are in vulgar shapes,
'Tis ten to one the wit escapes:
But when in capitals express'd,
The dullest reader smokes the jest;
Or else perhaps he may invent
A better than the poet meant;
As learned commentators view
In Homer more than Homer knew.
Swift, *On Poetry*.

They press towards That which they can never reach.
You not alone your *Troops* Command, but show
What you wou'd have 'em *Bear*, what *Do*;
Who, with Amazement, find all first Perform'd by *You*.

Most with Impatience Toil, and *Hazards* bear;
Some grieve at *Wounds*, and apprehend each *Scar*;
But your *Vast Soul* alone *Enjoys* the *War*.
Not the fierce *Lover* shows more chearful haste,
Meeting the beauteous Nymph to be Embrac'd,
As the Reward of all his Service past;
Than you to joyn in *Battle* with a Foe:
So much your Mighty Mind does *Glory* prize,
In your erected Look fierce Joy you show,
And kindled *Virtue* flashes in your Eyes,
While you all *Hazards*, *Wounds*, and *Death* despise.
You to your Dangerous *Wound* would give no rest;
You wou'd not be at leisure to be Cur'd:
The pain of which found room in every *Breast*,
Unfelt by you alone; or else endur'd
With that *Great Temper*, and that *God-like Mind*
Which in your *Sacred Breast* alone we find.

That *Wound*, at which th' Astonished Muse
Aid to all Numbers, did refuse.
A *Wound*, which deeply pierc'd each *Gen'rous Heart*:
Which your Three *Kingdoms* tenderly did feel;
A Blow, which made all injur'd *Princes* start,
And all the *Great Confederacy* Reel.
The only *Holy League*, that e'er was made,
A *League* oppress'd *Mankind* to free
From the most Barb'rous Foe did e'er Invade
With *Sword*, and *Fire*, and *Treachery*.
But Heav'n of you took such peculiar Care
That soon the *Royal Breach* it did Repair,
And sav'd your *Great Allies* from all Despair.
And now through all the *League*, in every Heart
Your Vig'rous Influence does *it self* exert;
You, like the *Soul*, are *All* in every *Part*.

When Coz'ning *Fame* did the false Tidings spread
Through *France*, That our *Nassau* was Dead;
The Great *Faux Brave*, void of all Shame,
Loudly to *Europe* did Proclaim
How much he did your *Sacred Person* dread:
By the most Barbarous, and Abject ways;
Such as the *Turk*, or *Tartar* scorns to use.
Thus, thus he did your Awful *Valour* praise,
And his own *Fear* to all Mankind Accuse.

Who in his mean, and *Savage* Joys must find
More of a *Woman*, than a *Hero*'s Mind.
Who, with no Decence, then his Joy cou'd bear,
With no sound Temper can Support His Fear,
(Tho Bullets he resolves not to come near)
When you, Sir, at the Head of this *Great League* appear.

Now, since so many, and so great Affairs
Employ your *Royal Mind* with Cares;
And you the mighty Weight *alone* Sustain,
Your happy *Subjects* you with *Arms defend*,
Instruct with *Manners*, and with *Laws amend*;
I, from *Mankind*, cou'd no Indulgence gain
If, from the *Public Good*, you longer I detain.
Welcome, *Great Prince*! from Toils, and Arms,
To soft *Maria*'s Beauteous Charms:
Who in your Absence *Reign'd* so well,
And did so much the *Virgin Queen* excel,
No more shall we old Tales of our *Eliza* tell.
Welcome, *Great Sir*! to fill your *Brittish* Throne:
Brittain, with Justice, you may call your own;
Which to a Mighty Kingdom you advance,
From a poor Providence, to Insulting *France*.

To these specimens of Shadwell's work as laureate may be added one other poem indirectly connected with his official productions. The formal celebration of St. Cecilia's Day (November 22) in England began in 1683 with a 'Musick Feast', for which three odes were written, the music for all three being composed by Henry Purcell. Similar festivals, with the number of odes reduced to one for each occasion, were held until 1687, the disorders of the Revolution preventing the holding of the festival during the next two years. The festival of 1687 furnished the occasion for one of the most famous of Dryden's lyric poems, 'From harmony, from heavenly harmony'. When the celebrations were resumed in 1690, Shadwell, as the new laureate, was invited to contribute the ode.[1] It is worth quoting in part, if only for the contrast with the work of his predecessor.

Song for St. Cecilia's Day, 1690,
by Thomas Shadwell.
Set to Music by Robert King.

O Sacred Harmony, prepare our lays;
While on Cecilia's day we sing your praise,
From earth to heaven our warbling voices raise.

[1] See W. H. Husk's *Account of the Musical Celebrations on St. Cecilia's Day*, London, 1857.

Join all your glorious instruments around,
The yielding air with your vibrations wound,
And fill heav'ns conclave with the mighty sound.

You did at first the warring atoms join,
Made qualities most opposite combine,
While discords did with pleasing concords join.

The universe, you fram'd, you still sustain,
Without you what in tune does now remain
Would jangle into chaos once again.

It does your most transcendent glory prove,
That to complete immortal joys above
There must be harmony to crown their love.

Dirges with joy still inspire
The doleful and lamenting quire;
With swelling hearts and flowing eyes
They solemnize their obsequies;
For grief they frequent discords choose,
Long bindings and chromatics use;
Organs and viols sadly groan
To the voice's dismal tone.

Shadwell's death, on November 19, 1692, terminated the shortest career of any of the laureates. But even in this brief period of less than four years he had had time to experience the uncertainties of office. For the first two years neither his 'fee' as laureate (£100) nor his 'salary' as historiographer royal (£200) was paid. The Report of the Accounts Commissioners made at the end of 1691 (*Hist. MSS. Comm. 13th Rep.*, v. 373) shows '2 years salary £600 due to Tho. Shadwell, Esq., Poet Laureat'. The report for the ensuing year (*14th Rep.*, vi. 166) shows that he was duly paid £300 just before his death. It is a pleasure to add that his salary as both laureate and historiographer was paid to his executors for the year following his death.[1] The same entry contains a record of £100 due 'Nahum Tate, Poet Laureat', reminding us that with Shadwell's death, the post of historiographer royal became separated from the laureateship.

[1] *Hist. Comm. MSS., House of Lords*, vol. i, new series, p. 90. This may be connected with the touching dedication of Shadwell's posthumous comedy, *The Volunteers or the Stock-Jobbers*, to the queen, signed by the laureate's wife, Anne Shadwell: 'Madam: The little wit of our poor family as well as the best part of the subsistence, perisht with my Husband; so that we have not wherewithall worthily to express our great acknowledgement due for the support and Favour we have already received . . . we shall only therefore . . . throw this our last play at Your Majesty's Feet, begging your Acceptance of it.'

There was good reason for the change, for whatever Shadwell's qualifications for the laureateship may have been, it was manifest that he had none as historiographer.

Shadwell's work as laureate is meagre in quantity and poor in quality; but for the former there is excuse, and, for the latter, at least palliation. During his four years' tenure he produced one Birthday Ode for the King (November 4, 1689), one welcome ode (on the King's return from Ireland, 1690), one New Year's Ode (*Votum Perenne*, 1692), one Ode for the Queen's birthday (April 30, 1689), and, possibly, the Queen's Birthday Ode of 1691. Even if we add to this the quasi-laureate ode on St. Cecilia's Day (1690), we still have a small sheaf. Considering that he was under no specific obligations, he seems to have availed himself of most of the occasions which his short tenure afforded.

These odes are, without exception, mechanical and dull. Here and there they seem to be on the verge of rising above the commonplace—

> Thou hast restored our laws their force again;
> We still shall conquer on the land by thee;
> By thee shall conquer on the main,—

but the promise is not fulfilled. Nor can his dullness be excused on the ground that he lacked adequate themes. An eighteenth-century laureate after earning his pension by celebrating the birthdays of the second or third George through a succession of years might be pardoned for any degree of sterility, but William came as the liberator of an oppressed Protestant people, and Shadwell reminds us on more than one occasion that in the time of oppression he had remained staunch and had suffered for his faith. The emotion of a great release might have found expression in that first Birthday Ode. Again, in the welcome to the king on his return from Ireland, we have seen how completely Shadwell failed to grasp his opportunity. Then, if ever, he might have been inspired. Such lines as the following, in which Shadwell draws a picture of Heaven staunching the king's wound—

> But Heav'n of you took such peculiar care
> That soon the Royal Breach it did repair,

almost incline us to question if some wit of Shadwell's day has not foisted upon us a travesty of what the laureate actually wrote.

Yet there is a measure of excuse for Shadwell. The time of William's

accession was an off season for Whig poets. The presses of 1689 and 1690 groaned with tall folios of odes welcoming the liberator of an oppressed people ; but most of the poems are no better than Shadwell's, and some are not so good. The ' last and greatest art ' was not much cultivated among the chorus of William's welcomers. And Shadwell must have known that all that Dorset expected was that he should be ' an honest man '.

He had no illusions about his poetic ability. ' If I ', he says in a tribute to Pietro Reggio, who had set one of Shadwell's songs [1] to music and included it in his *Book of Songs Italian and English* (1680)—

> ' Could write with a poetic fire
> Equal to thine in musick, I'd admire
> And praise thee fully ; now my verse will be
> Short of thy merit as I short of thee.
>
> But I, by this, advantage will receive ;
> Though to my numbers I no life can give,
> Yet they by thy more lasting skill shall live
> By joining mine with thy immortal name.'

As laureate he took such occasions as were accorded to him to write rhymed tributes to the king and the queen ; but, if he hoped for fame, he trusted for it to his comedies of humours. Even in his own generation scant notice was taken of his laureate effusions. ' We have lately lost *Thomas Shadwell* Esquire, Poet Laureat and Historiographer Royal,' says *The Gentleman's Journal* of November 1692. ' His Works are so universally known, particularly his Comedies, that none can be a Stranger to his Merit ; and all those that love to see the Image of humane Nature, lively drawn in all the various Colours and Shapes with which it is diversifyed in our age, must own that few living have equall'd that admirable Master in his Draughts of Humours and Characters. . . . His Genius was inexhaustible on those sorts of matters.'

Shorn of the natural overstatements of an obituary, this is the verdict of posterity. *The Gentleman's Journal*, though it styles him laureate and writes of him when his official rôle was still fresh in memory, refers to nothing but his plays ; and if it has been necessary in tracing this history to lay bare the ineptitudes of his poems, it is

[1] ' Arise, ye subterranean winds.' It may be found in Act II, sc. iv, of *The Tempest or the Enchanted Island*, attributed to Dryden. The song was set to music by Purcell.

only fair to say that Shadwell would have been the first to admit these ineptitudes and to hope that they might be as completely ignored by posterity in estimating his true worth, as they were by his contemporaries. Shadwell had two misfortunes—to be pilloried in an enduring satire and to be given an inappropriate rôle. We shall be fairest to him if we can remember that as a writer of comedies he did not deserve Flecknoe's throne, and that his laureateship was an incident, not a vocation.

NAHUM TATE

The death of Shadwell left the laureateship vacant at a time when poets who were also 'honest men' seemed scarce. The choice fell on Nahum Tate, who had co-operated with Dryden in the Second Part of *Absalom and Achitophel*, and had written a poem on the 'sacred memory' of Charles II. Since the Revolution he had signalized his loyalty to the new sovereign by a 'Poem occasioned by the Late Disturbances and Discontents in the State; with Reflections on the Rise and Progress of Statecraft' (1690), and by a 'Poem Occasioned by his Majesty's Voyage to Holland' (1691). In the latter, with characteristic extravagance of fancy, the poet finds himself transported in a vision to the Paradise of the 'Nobler Muses'.

> Where Milton, bowr'd in Lawrell groves . . .
> Himself a seraph now, with sacred flame
> Draws schemes proportion'd to great William's name.

On literary grounds Tate had fair qualifications. Like his predecessors in the laureateship, he was a dramatist. He had made a revision of *King Lear* which was popular in his time, and was to hold the stage for many years. He had made two other adaptations from Shakespeare, and one each from Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Webster, and had produced two original plays. He had published three volumes of verse.[1] And, like Shadwell, he was a protégé of Dorset.

[1] 'Poems by N. Tate. London: Printed by T. M. for Benj: Tooke, at the Signe of the Ship in St. Paul's Churchyard 1677.' 'Poems written on Several Occasions by N. Tate. The Second Edition enlarged. London: Printed for B. Tooke at the Ship in St. Paul's Churchyard 1684.' 'Characters of Vertue and Vice . . . Attempted in Verse from a Treatise of the Reverend Joseph Hall, Late Lord Bishop of Exeter. . . . By N. Tate . . . London, 1691.'

Tate was appointed on December 8, 1692.[1] The *Calendar of State Papers* (*Domestic*) for that year includes a warrant (p. 519) issued at Whitehall 'to the Attorney or Solicitor General, to prepare a bill constituting Naham (*sic*) Tate Esq., poet laureate, in the place of Thomas Shadwell, deceased, with the yearly fee of £100 payable quarterly at the Exchequer, "together with a butt or pipe of Canary wine every Christmas".'[2]

Thus installed near the beginning of the reign of William and Mary, Tate was destined to busy himself in the affairs of his office for the long period of twenty-three years. In this time, he saw death come to both the sovereigns under whom he had been appointed; served as laureate to Anne; lived through the decade of Swift's and Addison's zenith and Pope's brilliant dawn; knew Marlborough's glories; outlived Queen Anne also, and had time to write the first birthday ode of the Hanoverians.

He lived also through several changes in the status of his office. The post of historiographer royal (with a salary of £200), which had been held conjointly with the laureateship by Dryden and Shadwell, was on the latter's death permanently divorced from the laureateship and given to Thomas Rymer.[3] The laureateship itself, after

[1] Luttrell (*Brief Relation of State Affairs*, ii. 623) gives November 23 as the date of Tate's appointment. The announcement was made before the warrant was drawn up.

[2] Tate's patent, issued on December 23, 1692 (Patent Rolls, 4 William and Mary, part 8, No. 3421), duplicates Shadwell's, except in the amount of the pension.

[3] *Cal. State Papers, Dom.*, December 8, 1692. Whitehall. 'Warrant to the Attorney or Solicitor Generall, to prepare a bill constituting Thomas Rymer, Esq., Historiographer Royal in the place of Thomas Shadwell, Esq., deceased, with the salary of £200 per annum, payable quarterly, out of the Exchequer, to commence from Michaelmas last past.' Rymer and Shadwell are the 'Tom the second' and 'Tom the first' of Dryden's *Letter to Congreve* (1693):

> O that your brows my laurel had sustained,
> Well had I been deposed, if you had reigned:
> The father had descended for the son;
> For only you are lineal to the throne.
> Thus when the state one Edward did depose,
> A greater Edward in his room arose:
> But now, not I, but poetry is cursed;
> For Tom the second reigns like Tom the first.

It is alleged in the biography of Tate in *D. N. B.* that Tate 'was reappointed by the lord chamberlain on Anne's accession and was also named historiographer royal with a pension of £200 a year'. (See also Forbes Gray, *Poets Laureate*, p. 105.) There is no justification for the statement that Tate was appointed historiographer. Rymer held the post until his death, December 14, 1713. See Sir Thomas Duffus Hardy's

having shared with the higher dignities the honour of appointment by formal letters patent, now degenerated into a minor office of the court, for appointment to which only a brief warrant from the Lord Chamberlain was necessary. This was not, however, a special discrimination against the laureateship. The multiplication of letters patent had become a burden, and at the beginning of the eighteenth century the official procedure was simplified. At the accession of Anne, Tate was duly reappointed by the new method,[1] and in 1710 the final step in the process of putting the laureate on a par with the other paid servants of the king's household was taken by making the pension directly chargeable to the department of the Lord Chamberlain.[2] In the 'Book of the Order of the Household', a manuscript volume prepared by the Lord Chamberlain during the reign of Anne, the poet laureate is duly recorded in the department of the Lord Chamberlain. In the similar volumes for preceding reigns he is not there classified.

The production of annual birthday odes and New Year's odes was no more obligatory upon Tate than upon his predecessor. These odes were frequently written by the laureate and performed at court, but until the reigns of the Georges, the laureates were not 'obliged by sack and pension' to produce them. Indeed it happened not infrequently that another poet was called upon for this duty. Peter Motteux, for example, was commanded to write the New Year's Ode for 1694. 'You will grant, Sir', he says in his *Gentleman's Journal* for January 1694, 'that I might begin the year with better verse than the song which was performed on New Year's day before their Majesties, but not with a better subject. I had so little time to write that I chiefly studied to make it lyrical.' Thereupon he not only prints the song at the beginning of the magazine, but also prints it again at the end with the music, under the title: 'A Song set by

life of Rymer prefixed to the syllabus of the *Foedera*, vol. i, p. lxxix, and also the dedication of vol. xv of the *Foedera* itself (published in 1713) to the queen by Thomas Rymer, *eiusdem Serenissimae Reginae Historiographo* (see Appendix, note 1).

[1] 'These are to certify that I have sworn and admitted Nahum Tate into ye place and quality of Poet Laureat to Her Majesty in ordinary to have, hold and exercise and enjoy the said place, together with all rights, profits, privileges and advantages thereunto belonging, in as full and ample manner as any Poet Laureate hath formerly held, and of right ought to have held and enjoyed the same.

'Given under my hand this 24th day of December in the first year of her Majesty's reign. Jersey.' (L. C. 3/53.)

Edward Villiers, Earl of Jersey, was appointed Lord Chamberlain 1700, and continued in office after the accession of Anne.

[2] See *Cal. Treas. Papers*, 1708–14, p. 198.

Dr. John Blow, sung before their Majesties, the words by the author.' The ode for the queen's birthday, in the same year, ' set by Mr. Henry Purcell and sung by Mr. Damascene ', was apparently not by the laureate.[1] In the latter part of William's reign, Prior contributed several of the odes ; and, to cite one more instance, Queen Anne's Birthday Ode for 1703 was written by another hand, and was published by the same printer who brought out Tate's *Portrait Royal*, and at the same time.[2]

The emolument in Tate's warrant is called a ' fee ' in contradistinction to Rymer's ' salary ' as historiographer. Apparently when the laureate's ' fee ' became a ' salary ', and when the laureate himself became a regularly paid officer of the Lord Chamberlain's household, he had to write his two odes a year.

Tate had the opportunity, however, to write a number of New Year's and birthday odes during his long tenure.[3] The first New Year's ode after his appointment, set to music by Dr. Blow, performed before their majesties on January 1, 1693, and printed in *The Gentleman's Journal* for January 1693, may serve as an example.

AN ODE UPON THE NEW YEAR

The Happy Happy Year is Born,
That Wonders shall disclose ;
That Conquest with fix'd Lawrells shall adorn
And give our lab'ring Hercules Repose.
Ye Graces that resort
To Virtue's Temple, blest Maria's Court,
With Incense and with Songs as Sweet
The Long expected Season meet,
The Long expected Season gently Greet.

Maria (thus devoutly say)
Maria—Oh appear ! appear !

[1] The queen's birthday was in April. The ode is given in *The Gentleman's Journal* for May 1694.

[2] ' An Ode for an Entertainment on Her Majesty's Birthday. . . . The Night Performance at St. James's. The Words by Mr Wall sett to musick by Mr Abell. Printed for J. Nutt, near Stationer's Hall, 1703.' Tate had written the New Year's Ode of the same year.

[3] I have succeeded in tracing five birthday odes and six New Year's odes written by Tate during his tenure. In view of the publicity accorded to these occasions it is beyond question that many more could have been traced, if he had produced the full quota of two a year during twenty-three years. Moreover, such references as do occur suggest that the odes were not a matter of routine. See, for example, Luttrell, *Brief Relation*, entry on the king's birthday, November 7, 1699.

Thy softest Charms Display,
Smile and bless the Infant Year;
Smile on its Birth in Kindness to our Isle,
For if this Genial Day
You Cheerfully Survey
Succeeding Years in just Return on you and Us shall Smile.

Thus, let Departing Winter Sing,
Approach, Advance, Thou promis'd Spring,
And if for Action not designed
Together, soon, together bring
Confederate Troops in Europe's Cause combin'd.
A Busier Prospect Summer yields,
Floating Navies harrass'd Fields.
From far the Gallick Genius spying
(Of Unjust War the Just Disgrace)
Their Broken Squadrons Flying,
And Britain's Caesar Lightning in the Chase.

But Autumn does Impatient grow
To crown the Victor's brow;
To wait him home triumphant from Alarms
To Albion and Maria's Arms.
Then to conclude the Glorious Scene,
To Europe's Joy let me return,
When Britain's Senate shall convene
To thank their Monarch and no more his Absence mourn.
Their kind supplies our fainting Hopes restor'd,
Their injur'd counsels shall sure means afford,
To fix the Gen'ral Peace won by our Monarch's Sword.

Chorus.

While Tyrants their Neighbours and Subjects Oppress
All Nations the Pious Restorer Caress.
Seccurely our Hero prepares for the Field,
His valour his Sword, his Virtue his Shield;
He Arms in Compassion for Europe's Release,
He Conquers to Save, and he Warrs to give Peace.

In addition to his New Year's and birthday odes, which are hardly distinguishable except by their dates, and are mere floreate variations on the specimen already quoted, the following official poems by Tate have been preserved:

1. 'An Ode upon the Ninth of January, 1693/4, the First Secular Day since the University of Dublin's Foundation by Queen Elizabeth, by Mr. Tate. Dublin, Printed by Joseph Ray, on College Green, 1694.'

Nahum Tate was born in Dublin (1652), matriculated at Trinity

College as a scholar in 1668, and graduated B.A. in 1672. His father, Faithful Tate (Teate), was also a graduate of Dublin (B.A. 1621, M.A. 1624), and served as Acting Provost 1641–5. The choice of Nahum Tate as the official poet of the Centenary was therefore natural, and must have been gratifying to the recently appointed poet laureate.[1]

The quality of the verse is not remarkable, but the ode is interesting as reflecting Tate's feeling that he must speak not only as a son of Trinity but also as 'servant to their Majesties':

> But chiefly recommend to fame
> Maria's and great William's name:
> For surely no Hibernian Muse
> (Whose isle to him her freedom owes)
> Can her Restorer's praise refuse,
> While Boyne or Shannon flows.

2. 'A Poem on the Late Promotion of Several Eminent Persons in Church and State, by N. Tate, Servant to Their Majesties, London: Printed for Richard Baldwin, near the Oxford Arms in Warwick Lane, 1694.'

This is dedicated to Tate's patron, Dorset ('Lord Chamberlain of Their Majesties Household'), and is at least remarkable for its comprehensiveness. Conceiving flattery of those in high place to be his manifest professional duty, and finding

> Since Britain Worthies their just orbs sustain,
> And loud applause resound from every plain,
> Our British Bards the only silent throng—

[1] J. W. Stubbs (*The History of the University of Dublin from 1591 to 1800*, Dublin and London, 1889, pp. 136 ff.) prints a translation of the Latin account of the proceedings given in the University Register. This entry records: 'A thanksgiving ode was then sung, accompanied by musical instruments,' but does not mention Tate's name. In a contribution to the Tercentenary *Book of Trinity College, Dublin*, 1591–1891 (Belfast, 1892), the Rev. J. P. Mahaffy supplements the Register by Dunton's account, written from Dublin in 1699 while the memory of the occasion was still fresh. After describing the centenary sermon, Dunton continues: 'In the afternoon there were several Orations in Latin spoke by the Scholars in praise of Queen Elizabeth and the succeeding Princes, and an Ode made by Mr. Tate (the Poet Laureate), who was bred up in this College.' Dunton adds several stanzas of the ode. After quoting Dunton's account, Dr. Mahaffy continues: 'The sermon . . . is still extant; so is the musical ode, but so scarce that there seems to be only one copy known, which the researches for the present feast have unearthed. . . . The music of the ode was composed by no less a person than Henry Purcell, and would certainly have been repeated at our Tercentenary had it been equal to his standard works. But it is a curiously poor and perfunctory piece of work.' The issue of 1694, noted above, is in the Bodleian. It does not give Purcell's music.

Tate attempts to cover the whole ground in this one production. He pays tribute in extravagant terms to the Archbishop of Canterbury (John Tillotson); Lord Somers; the Earl of Pembroke; the Duke of Shrewsbury; Sir John Trenchard; the Lord Mayor of London; Edward Russel, Earl of Oxford, admiral of the fleet which defeated the French under Tourville; the Duke of Ormonde; and Charles Montague, Earl of Halifax, then recently appointed chancellor of the exchequer. The praise of Montague as the great poet of his day concludes the poem.

3. 'Mausolaeum: A Funeral Poem On Our Late Gracious Sovereign Queen Mary, Of Blessed Memory. By N. Tate, Servant to His Majesty. London: Printed for B. Aylmer, at the Three Pigeons against the Royal Exchange in Cornhill. . . . 1695.'

This long eulogy is full of Tate's characteristic thin conceits. Among its absurdities is an ingenuous lament, that there will be no further opportunities for queen's birthday odes—

> No more that festival shall entertain
> The court with revel or harmonious strain;
> For cheerful songs, my bards must now retreat
> And dirges breathe to some forsaken seat.

4. 'An Elegy on the Most Reverend Father in God, His Grace, John, Late Lord Archbishop of Canterbury. By N. Tate, Servant of His Majesty. London: Printed for B. Aylmer at the Three Pigeons against the Royal Exchange in Cornhill. . . . 1695.'

John Tillotson, Archbishop of Canterbury, died on November 22, 1694, over a month before the death of Queen Mary; but this poem was evidently published considerably later than the preceding, as Tate explains in his preface that ''Twas reverence for so extraordinary a subject, not want of inclination that so long withheld me from making this attempt; and I could willingly have suppressed it, in the consternation that has since befallen us'. Tate seems to have had a genuinely religious nature, and may well have felt a sincere affection for Tillotson; but in this poem, as in the *Mausolaeum*, conceits and prettiness of phrase effectively conceal whatever genuine emotion he may have been seeking to express.

5. 'A Congratulatory Poem On the New Parliament Assembled on This Great Conjuncture of Affairs. By N. Tate, Esq., Poet-Laureat to His Majesty, London: Printed for W. Rogers, at the Sun against St. Dunstan's Church in Fleetstreet, 1701.'

This is an instance of Tate's facility in composition. Parliament assembled on February 6, 1701, to consider the question of war with France. The laureate's poem, which is twelve folio pages in length, was in print before the end of February.[1] It is Tate's nearest approach to Dryden's rôle as poet-advocate, the king's foreign policy being set forth as earnestly as was possible in the laureate's mincing style.

6. 'A Monumental Poem in Memory of the Right Honourable Sir George Treby K^t^ Late Lord Chief Justice of His Majesty's Court of Common-Pleas: Consisting of His Character and Elegy. By N. Tate, Esq., Poet-Laureat to His Majesty. London, Printed for Jacob Jonson within Gray's Inn-Gate next Gray's-Inn-Lane. 1702.'

This is the only one of Tate's eulogistic poems in which he lays aside his affectations and writes simply.

> Who truth from specious falsehood can divide
> And always like an Oracle decide;
> Whose large and richly furnisht mind appears
> A register of long-transacted years. . . .
> Could verse assume his style, of strength and ease,
> Compacted sense, with all the charms to please,
> My Muse, that with th' accomplisht Judge began,
> Might next proceed to sing the accomplisht man.

7. 'Portrait Royal. A Poem upon Her Majesty's Picture Set up in Guildhall; By Order of the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen of this City of London. Drawn by Mr. Closterman. Written by N. Tate Esq., Poet-Laureate to Her Majesty, London: Printed by J. Rawlins for J. Nutt near Stationers-Hall, 1703.'

This contains an 'Epistle Dedicatory' to His Royal Highness, Prince George of Denmark, twenty pages of verse in Tate's usual manner, and four pages of pretentious annotations.

8. 'The Triumph or Warriors Welcome: A Poem on the Glorious Successes of the Last Year. With the Ode for New Year's Day 1705. By Mr. Tate, Poet-Laureat to Her Majesty. London: Printed by F. Rawlins for J. Holland at the Bible in St. Paul's Alley. Sold by F. Nutt near Stationers-Hall. 1705.'

Four months after Blenheim, Marlborough reached London (December 14, 1704). The indefatigable laureate, then in his fifty-third year, produced for the occasion this, the longest and most elaborate of all his official poems.

[1] See *Term Cat.*, ed. Arber, vol. iii, p. 231.

9. 'Britannia's Prayer for the Queen. By Mr. Tate, Poet-Laureat to Her Majesty, London. Printed for John Chantry at the Sign of Lincoln's Inn Square, near Lincoln's Inn Fields, 1706.'[1]

This is a conventional tribute, supplemented by a prayer for the queen's safety. Queen Anne suffered one of her frequent attacks of illness during January 1706.

10. 'The Triumph of Union: With the Muse's Address For the Consummation of It in the Parliament of Great Britain. Written by N. Tate, Poet Laureate to Her Majesty. London: Printed in the Year 1707.'

Tate adjures his Muse to 'vindicate your title to the Bays' by acclaiming the 'Act of Union' with Scotland. The laureate's incurable habit of substituting conceits for thought nullifies the opportunity which the theme affords.

11. 'A Congratulatory Poem to His Royal Highness Prince George of Denmark, Lord High Admiral of Great Britain, upon the Glorious Successes at Sea. By N. Tate Esq., Poet-Laureat to Her Majesty. To which is added A Happy Memorable Song, on the Fight near Oudenarde, Between the Duke of Marlborough and Vendome. London. Printed by Henry Hills, in Black-fryars, near the Waterside. 1708.'

This is in the laureate's characteristic vein of panegyric. The poem is oddly interspersed with prose passages in one of which Tate acknowledges his debt to Dr. Gibbons, 'the worthy person, to whose learning and judgment I am most obliged, and therefore most accountable in any matter of the Muses.' Dr. Gibbons (the Mirmillo of Garth's *Dispensary*) was physician in ordinary to Princess Anne until her accession in 1702. Dryden pays tribute to his skill in the Postscript to Virgil (1697). No other information is available concerning Tate's relations with Gibbons.

Of greater interest, because it anticipates by four years Addison's essays on Chevy Chase in *The Spectator*, is the fact that this most conventional of laureates should have appended to his eulogy a 'Happy Memorable Ballad', as he entitles it at the head of the verses, 'On the Fight near Oudenarde. . . . As also the strange and wonderful manner how the Princes of the Blood were found in a Wood. In

[1] Also included in *Poems on Affairs of State from 1620 to this Present Year, 1707*. Vol. iv. London. Printed in the year 1707, p. 129.

allusion to the Unhappy Memorable Song commonly called Chevy Chace.' [1]

God prosper long our gracious Queen,
Our lives and safeties all,
A woful fight of late there did
Near Oudenarde befal.

To drive the French with sword and gun,
Brave Marlborough took his way,
Ah! wo the time that France beheld
The fighting of that day. . . .

And so God bless the Queen and Duke,
And send a lasting peace,
That wars and foul debate henceforth
In all the world may cease.

12. 'The Triumph of Peace. A Poem on the Magnificent Public Entry of His Excellency The Illustrious Duke of Shrewsbury, Ambassador Extraordinary from her Majesty of Great Britain, to the Most Christian King. And the Magnificent Public Entry of His Excellency The Illustrious Duke D'Aumont, Ambassador Extraordinary from His Most Christian Majesty, to the Queen of Great Britain. With the Prospect of the Glorious Procession for a General Thanksgiving at St. Paul's. By Mr. Tate, Poet-Laureat to Her Majesty, London; Printed for James Holland in St. Paul's Church yard; and are sold by J. Morphew, near Stationer's Hall 1713.'

The peace with France was proclaimed in London on May 5, 1713, amid general rejoicing. The poem was evidently written in the same month as an *anticipation* of the 'Magnificent Public Entry',[2] for in June Shrewsbury was recalled from his embassy to France under conditions which rendered Tate's eulogies inappropriate. This poem is the most impressively printed of any of the contemporary issues of Tate's occasional poems. It is dedicated with elaborate formality to the queen.

[1] Tate may, indeed, have piqued himself on fidelity to a *court* tradition. The Duke of Manchester (*Court and Society from Elizabeth to Anne*, London, 1864, ii. 351) writing of the year 1708, comments on the fact that progress in musical matters, in spite of the influence of the Purcells and of Italian opera, had been slow since Charles I's time, when 'the most honoured and most frequently played tunes at court were "Hermit Poor" and "Chevy Chase".'

[2] Rash Muse forbear,
'Tis rude to offer him your garland here,
Wait his return to Albion's longing isle.

13. 'The Muse's Memorial of Her Late Majesty. Addressed to His Grace the Duke of Buckinghamshire.'

It is not clear at what time between the queen's death on August 1, 1714, and the laureate's death on July 23, 1715, this poem was composed. It appeared posthumously in January 1715/6, when it was given first place in a volume entitled 'The Loyal Mourner for the Best of Princes: Being a Collection of Poems Sacred to the Immortal Memory of Her Late Majesty Queen Anne. By a Society of Gentlemen. Printed for J. Morphew, near Stationers Hall, 1716'. This volume was edited by Charles Oldisworth. *The Muse's Memorial* is in Tate's worst style, an extraordinary *congeries* of mourning Cupids, royal saints, weeping graces, tearful nymphs, and dishevelled muses.[1]

As the first New Year's Ode of Tate's long career has been quoted, a few stanzas of his last Birthday Ode may serve to round off the series.

In spite of much Jacobite rioting, the first royal anniversary after King George's accession was celebrated with unusual brilliance. 'There was a greater appearance of the nobility and gentry at court,' says *The Flying Post* of May 28–31, 'and in more splendour than has been known on any such occasion.' The laureate's ode was duly performed, but was not subsequently issued in pamphlet form after the manner of most of his previous effusions. However, *The Flying Post* of June 9–11 reprints it on its own responsibility, 'since Mr. Tate, the Poet Laureat, is so modest as not to publish the Song which he composed on occasion of His Majesty's Birth-Day'.

MR. TATE, THE POET-LAUREAT'S SONG, FOR HIS MAJESTY'S BIRTH-DAY, MAY THE 28TH. 1715.

Arise, harmonious pow'rs
From your Elysian bow'rs
And Nymphs Heliconian springs;
To caress the Royal Day,
That such a blessing did convey,
No less a blessing than the best of Kings. . . .

When Kings, that make the publick good their care,
Advance in dignity and state,

[1] To this list of occasional poems associated with Tate's office may be added 'An Entire Set of the Monitors, intended for the Promotion of Religion and Vertue and Suppressing of Vice and Immorality. Containing Forty-one Poems on Several Subjects. In Pursuance of Her Majesty's Most Gracious Directions. Performed by Mr. Tate, Poet Laureat to Her Majesty, Mr. Smith and Others. . . . London, 1720.'

Their rise no envy can create;
Because their subjects in their grandeur share,
For like the sun, the higher they ascend,
The farther their indulgent beams extend.
Yet long before our Royal Sun
His destined course has run
We're blest to see a glorious Heir,[1]
That shall the mighty loss repair,
When he that blazes now, shall this low sphere resign,
In a sublimer orb eternally to shine. . . .

The laureate had no further opportunity to pay tribute to his new master. He died just two months after the performance of his last Birthday Ode, on July 30, 1715.[2]

The quality of Tate's work as laureate has perhaps been sufficiently characterized in the brief comments on the poems just enumerated. At its best it is little more than a pleasant tinkle of lively verse. At its worst, it is full of cheap conceits, artificial and fantastic.

And He who, now to sense, now nonsense leaning,
Means not, but blunders round about a meaning;
And He, whose fustian 's so sublimely bad,
It is not Poetry, but prose run mad:
All these my modest Satire bade translate,
And own'd that nine such Poets made a *Tate*.[3]

[1] 'What added to the joy and grandeur of the solemnity, was to see their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess, and three of their Royal Issue, who with his Highness Prince Frederick, are so many pledges given us by Heaven of our being delivered forever from falling again under Popery and Tyranny' (*Flying Post*, May 28 to 31, 1715).

[2] The close of Tate's career has been persistently misrepresented by his biographers, who have accorded to him the unenviable distinction of being the only poet laureate (except Dryden, who was the victim of a political revolution) to be deprived of the laureateship during his lifetime. The misrepresentation has arisen through a confusion of dates. Giles Jacob (who, as a contemporary, was assumed to know) says in the *Poetical Register* (London, 1719, p. 225) that Tate 'died in the Mint, *Anno* 1716, and was interred in St. George's Church, Southwark'. Dr. Johnson, drawing the natural inference from the fact that Tate's successor was appointed in 1715, says in the life of Rowe: 'At the accession of King George, he (Rowe) was made poet-laureate, I am afraid, by the ejection of poor Nahum Tate who (1716) died in the Mint.' Tate, says the *Dictionary of National Biography*, 'seems to have lost his post on the accession of George I, his successor, Nicholas Rowe, being appointed on 1 Aug. 1715'. Contemporary newspapers, however, make it clear that Tate died in office. Among several which note the fact, *The British Weekly Mercury*, July 30 to August 6, 1715, may be quoted: 'On Saturday Morning last, dy'd Nahum Tate, Poet-Laureat.' At the end of the next week, the newspapers announce the appointment of his successor, Nicholas Rowe. See *The Evening Post*, August 13–16, 1715, quoted *infra*, p. 106.

[3] Pope, *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, ll. 185–90.

It is fantastic even when there is reason to suppose the poet in earnest and deeply moved. Tate's muse was permanently rouged.

To the modern reader his verse is singularly irritating. With a rather pretentious elegance of manner, Tate combines a fawning humility, which stamps him, beyond all the other laureates, as the professional sycophant. He is constantly obtruding himself in the act of depreciating himself. After a season of Tate's polite style, one turns back with relief to Shadwell,

> Who never sunk in prose nor soared in verse.

And yet many of Tate's contemporaries seem to have thought of him as an ideal laureate. His appointment was welcomed by *The Gentleman's Journal* of January 1693 in terms of genuine enthusiasm, and that magazine during its short existence continued to chant his praises.

Shadwell had been serious and heavy, Tate had a lighter touch and a defter fancy. He had the qualities which made him an honoured contributor to *The Athenian Gazette*.

> Long may the laurel flourish on your brow,
> Since you so well a Laureate's duty know . . .
> Such service seems to claim the gen'ral voice
> And justify your patron Dorset's choice,

wrote one of his admirers ; and another, when Tate published the most ambitious of his non-eulogistic poems, *Panacea, a Poem upon Tea* (1700), wrote of him in terms whose extravagance and absurdity are worthy of their theme :

> See Spanish Calderon in strength outdone :
> And see the prize of Wit from Tasso won :
> See Corneil's skill and decency refined ;
> See Rapin's art, see Molier's fire outshined ;
> See Dryden's lamp, to our admiring view
> Brought from the tomb to shrine and blaze anew !
>
> The British Lawrell by old Chaucer worn,
> Still fresh and gay, did Dryden's Brow adorn,
> And that its lustre may not fade on thine,
> Wit, Fancy, Judgment, Tate, in thee combine.
> Thy powerful genius thus, from censure's frown
> And Envy's blast, in flourishing renown,
> Supports our British Muse's verdant crown ;
> Nor only takes a Trusty Laureate's care,
> Lest thou the Muses garland might'st impair ;
> But more enriched, the chaplet to bequeath,
> With Eastern Tea joined to the Lawrel-wreath.

Tate could write a good poem about tea (it really is a good poem), and when he came to eulogize a great personage or pay tribute to the memory of the august dead, he still wrote in terms of tea. It may seem absurd to us, but for the readers of *The Athenian Gazette*—who were the average British public of Tate's day—it was satisfactory.

Nor, indeed, has the vogue of this most trivial of poets been confined to his own generation. In spite of Swift's large scorn,[1] and Pope's contempt for 'Tate's poor page', Tate has persisted. He was appointed to an office which associates his name with those of Dryden and Wordsworth and Tennyson; he produced a version of Shakespeare's *King Lear* which ousted Shakespeare's own play from the stage for over a century; he shared in the production of a metrical version of the Psalms which was reprinted in a steady stream of editions for more than a hundred years; and he wrote a Christmas carol, 'While Shepherds watched their flocks by night,' which has probably enjoyed a more enduring popularity than any single production of any other English laureate.

[1] 'There is another, called Nahum Tate, who is ready to make oath, that he has caused many reams of verse to be published, whereof both himself and his book-seller, (if lawfully required,) can still produce authentic copies, and therefore wonders why the world is pleased to make such a secret of it'. *A Tale of a Tub* (Epistle Dedicatory to His Royal Highness, Prince Posterity).

VII

THE LAUREATESHIP IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

> Know, reader, that the Laureate's post sublime
> Is destined to record in tuneful rhyme
> The deeds of British monarchs twice a year,
> If great—how happy is the tuneful tongue!
> If pitiful (as Shakespeare says), the song
> Must suckle fools and chronicle small beer.
>
> PETER PINDAR.

NICHOLAS ROWE

THE accession of Nicholas Rowe marks the beginning of the second period of the laureateship, the period during which the laureate was required to furnish, annually, a New Year's Ode and a Birthday Ode, to be sung before the king. All the Georgian laureates, Rowe, Eusden, Cibber, Whitehead, Warton, Pye, and Southey, were under this obligation, the custom lapsing under George IV, during Southey's tenure of the office. Throughout the eighteenth century, the laureate was, in a more direct sense than he had been before, a hired servant of the court. His work was to supply words for the composer, and it hardly strains the point to say that any words would do as long as they lent themselves to musical composition.[1]

George the First was frankly ignorant of the language in which he was to be berhymed, and notoriously indifferent to poetry in any language. In that delightful 'small-beer chronicle' which Thackeray gives of the Electoral Court of Hanover, are recorded a master of the horse, a high chamberlain, fencing and dancing masters, court physicians and a court barber, a French cook, a body cook, ten other cooks, six cooks' assistants, two Braten masters, or masters of the roast, a pastry-baker and a pie-baker, seven officers of the wine and beer cellars—but of court poet or poet laureate, not a trace. There were, however, a court organist, two *musikanten*, four French fiddlers, twelve trumpeters and a bugler. What George and the German courtiers and

[1] It is not without significance that while the poet laureate's emolument was £100, the emolument of the King's Master of Music was £200.

mistresses whom he brought over with him lacked in taste for poetry, they made good in taste for music. The great Handel himself had been George's *capellmeister* at Hanover, and had preceded his royal master to England. There, after a brief estrangement, he had succeeded in re-establishing himself in the king's good graces. For such a monarch and such a court, no one could doubt where the real interest would be, when the 'King's Band of Music' and the Chapel Royal were requisitioned to furnish their New Year and Birthday celebrations every year. Here was a poet laureate, a regular official of the Lord Chamberlain's household, with nothing very definite to do. Let him furnish the words by all means, if words there had to be. At any rate, nobody at court had to pay any attention to them.[1] Was it strange that some of the laureates should have been so little known to fame, and that the laureateship should for a time have been smothered in the ignominy of its representatives?

Yet the court occasionally happened to hit upon men of real worth. Nicholas Rowe bade fair to give the laureateship a respectability which it had lacked since Dryden's day. He was a man of parts and dignity, free alike from the crudeness of Shadwell and the cheapness of Tate. He did not 'come rolling home' from taverns,[2] and a cheerful disposition and sufficient income saved him from the 'abject poverty' and 'dejected air' upon which the biographers of his immediate predecessor have been prone to dilate. Unlike Tate again, he found his friends among the ablest and best of his day, and had not the necessity, as he lacked the inclination, to fawn for recognition and benefits.

The son of a barrister of the Middle Temple, he was educated at

[1] Cf. the Pope-Warburton note (1743) to Pope's satire in *The Dunciad*, on Cibber's New Year Odes: 'Made by the Poet Laureate for the time being, to be sung at Court on every New Year's Day, the words of which are happily drowned in the instruments' (Pope, ed. Elwin-Courthope, iv. 104 *n.*). Cf. also Whitehead's 'Pathetic Apology for all Laureates, Past, Present and to Come':

> His Muse, obliged by sack and pension,
> Without a subject or invention,
> Must certain words in order set
> As innocent as a Gazette. . . .
> Content with Boyce's harmony,
> Who throws on many a worthless lay
> His music and his powers away.

[2] Yet Rowe was not an undeserving recipient of the butt of sack.

> To drink and droll be Rowe allow'd
> Till the third watchman's call

says Pope in *A Farewell to London*, 1715.

Westminster under Dr. Busby, and then read law, but, instead of practising, he chose to follow his bent for letters.

The success of *Tamerlane* (1702) established his position as a dramatist and also gave him a certain amount of political prestige—for the hero was designed as a portrait of William III, and Bajazet as a caricature of Louis XIV, and the portraiture so caught the imagination of the public that the play was produced annually at Drury Lane on November 5 (anniversary alike of William III's landing and of the Gunpowder Plot) till 1815. Before his appointment to the laureateship, he had written five other tragedies, of which *Jane Shore* was the most popular. Meanwhile he was displaying facility, if not genius, in translation, in light occasional verse, and in those pompous and elaborate odes with which the bards of the day saw fit to celebrate notable events. Translations from Greek and Latin, and imitations of Horace, humorous and mildly satirical poems, *vers de société*, fell rapidly from his pen,[1] and in 1707 he published a long *Poem Upon the Late Glorious Successes of Her Majesty's Arms, Humbly Inscribed to the Right Honourable the Earl of Godolphin, Lord High Treasurer of England,* which celebrates Marlborough's victories with all the customary flourishes, and does not neglect to pay incidental tribute to the Lord High Treasurer.

As a successful poet and playwright, Rowe was fully in line with the traditions of the laureateship, but his further distinction as a scholar gives him (unless Warton can be cited as a parallel) a unique position in the eighteenth-century laureate succession. Whatever faults may be found with Rowe's edition of Shakespeare (1709), that credit must be conceded to it which belongs to pioneer work in a great field of scholarship. The prefatory 'Account of the Life and Writings of the Author' is our first substantial biography of Shakespeare, and preserves traditions which but for Rowe would probably have been lost; and if many of his guesswork emendations were wrong, not

[1] A small group of his humorous and satirical poems, with several imitations of Horace's odes, was published by Curll in 1714 under the title: 'Poems on Several Occasions, By N. Rowe, Esq., London. Printed for E. Curll at the Dial and Bible against St. Dunstan's Church in Fleet Street, 1714.' This volume is identified in the Elwin-Courthope edition of Pope (x. 466 *n.*) as the one to which Curll is made to refer in his deathbed confession (Pope's 'Barbarous Revenge on Mr. Curll'): 'I confess I have no animosity against Mr. Rowe, having printed part of *Callipædia* and an incorrect edition of his poems without his leave in quarto.' The Occasional Poems themselves are innocuous, but Curll, with characteristic effrontery, added 'The Exceptionable Passages left out in the Acting and Printing of *Jane Shore*'.

a few have remained unshaken by more scientific methods of editing. He was a man of genuine and wide learning. His translation of Quillet's *Callipædia* (1710) cannot perhaps be cited as evidence, but the fragmentary translations from Greek and Latin poets, scattered through his works, are admirably done, and his later paraphrase of Lucan's *Pharsalia* was described by Dr. Johnson as 'one of the greatest productions of English poetry'. 'He was master', says Welwood in his preface to the *Lucan*, 'of most parts of polite learning, especially the classic authors, both Greek and Latin; he understood the French, Italian, and Spanish languages. He had likewise read most of the Greek and Roman histories in their original languages, and most that are written in English, French, Italian and Spanish.'

With these qualities of mind, he combined great personal charm. 'His voice was uncommonly sweet,' says Spence;[1] 'his observations so lively, and his manner so engaging that his friends delighted in his conversation.' The same author recalls Mrs. Oldfield's remark that 'the best school she had ever known was only hearing Rowe read her part in his tragedies'. 'I am just returned from the country,' Pope writes to Caryll, September 20, 1713, 'whither Mr. Rowe did me the favour to accompany me and to pass a week at Binfield. I need not tell you how much a man of his turn could not but entertain me; but I must acquaint you there is a vivacity and gaiety of disposition almost peculiar to that gentleman, which renders it impossible to part from him without that uneasiness and chagrin which generally succeeds all great pleasures.' James Welwood, his physician and literary executor, says that 'his inimitable manner of diverting and enlivening the company made it impossible for any one to be out of Humour when he was in it'.[2] Nicholas Amhurst, a young admirer, sums up the matter in two happy lines:

> Enough for him that Congreve was his Friend,
> That Garth and Steele and Addison commend.[3]

It would be pleasing to think that these qualities of mind and heart won him the laureateship, but his political views counted for more. 'Going into the company of Great Men is like going into the other World: you ought to stay till you are called,' he wrote in

[1] *Anecdotes*, ed. Singer, p. 258. [2] Preface to Rowe's *Lucan*.
[3] 'On the Death of Mr. Rowe' in *Musarum Lacrymae. . . . By Several Hands*, ed. Ch. Beckingham, 1719.

'An Original Chapter of the Manner of Living with Great Men';[1] but he was, none the less, a zealous, though not undignified, courtier of the great, and a 'great Whig'.[2] His caution became a by-word. 'He would not converse with Tories,' says Spence;[3] and Pope writes in his rhyming letter to Henry Cromwell, just after the Act of Union with Scotland had been passed,

> But, sir, from Brocas, Fouler, me
> In vain you think to 'scape rhyme-free. . . .
> Sooner shall Rowe lampoon the Union,
> Tidcombe take oaths on the Communion.

Appropriately enough, Rowe was appointed a few months later to the post of under-secretary to the Duke of Queensberry, Secretary of State for Scotland. He lost this position on the duke's death in 1711, but the foothold thus obtained eased the way to a number of other appointments,[4] of which the laureateship is the only one that concerns us here.

When Tate died on July 23, 1715, Rowe was at the height of his literary and political career, and the Lord Chamberlain had apparently no hesitation. 'Nicholas Rowe, Esq.', says *The Evening Post* of August 13–16, 1715, 'is appointed Poet Laureat, in the room of N. Tate, Esq. deceas'd, and on the 12th instant took the usual oath before the Duke of Bolton, Lord Chamberlain of His Majesty's Household.' Four months later *The Post Boy* (December 29–31) announces his first ode: 'On Monday next will be published, An Ode for the New Year, 1716, By N. Rowe, Esq., Servant to His Majesty, Printed for J. Tonson at Shakespear's Head in the Strand.' Of the small number of New Year's odes which he had time to produce during his brief tenure, this will serve as a sufficient specimen. The Jacobite rebellion under the Earl of Mar had just been suppressed, and King George had conformed to the National Church—that 'other form divine' which Rowe finds shining propitiously near the hero. By the actual arrival of the New Year, King George had beaten a retreat

[1] 'Characters of Theophrastus . . . to which is added An Original Chapter of the Manner of Living with Great Men. . . . London. Printed for E. Curll. 1709.'

[2] 'Mr. Nic. Rowe is made poet laureat in the room of Mr. Tate, deceased. This Rowe is a great Whig, and but a mean poet.' (*Reliquiae Hearnianae*, ii. 16.)

[3] *Anecdotes*, ed. Singer, p. 3.

[4] Land-Surveyor of the Customs of the Port of London; Clerk of the Councils to the Prince of Wales; Clerk of the Presentations under the Lord Chancellor, the Earl of Macclesfield.

from English courtiers and English rhymesters to his beloved Hanover, leaving Prince George Augustus and Caroline of Anspach to listen to his laureate's first offering.

ODE FOR THE NEW YEAR, 1716.

Hail to thee, glorious rising Year,
With what uncommon grace thy days appear!
Comely art thou in thy prime,
Lovely child of hoary Time;
Where thy golden footsteps tread,
Pleasures all around thee spread;
Bliss and beauty grace thy train;
Muse, strike the lyre to some immortal strain.
But, Oh! what skill, what master hand,
Shall govern or constrain the wanton band?
Loose like my verse they dance, and all without command.
Images of fairest things
Crowd about the speaking strings;
Peace and sweet prosperity,
Faith and cheerful loyalty,
With smiling love and deathless poesy.

Ye scowling shades who break away,
Well do ye fly and shun the purple day,
Every fiend and fiend-like form,
Black and sullen as a storm,
Jealous Fear, and false Surmise,
Danger with her dreadful eyes,
Faction, Fury, all are fled,
And bold Rebellion hides her daring head.
Behold, thou gracious Year, behold,
To whom thy treasures all thou shalt unfold,
For whom thy whiter days were kept from times of old!
See thy George, for this is he!
On his right hand waiting free,
Britain and fair Liberty.
Every good is in his face,
Every open honest grace.
Thou great Plantagenet! immortal be thy race!

See! the sacred scyon springs,
See the glad promise of a line of kings!
Royal youth! what bard divine,
Equal to a praise like thine,
Shall in some exalted measure
Sing thee, Britain's dearest treasure?

Who her joy in thee shall tell,
Who the sprightly note shall swell,
His voice attempering to the tuneful shell?
Thee Audenard's recorded field,
Bold in thy brave paternal band, beheld,
And saw with hopeless heart thy fainting rival yield.
Troubled he, with sore dismay,
To thy stronger fate gave way,
Safe beneath thy noble scorn,
Wingy-footed was he borne,
Swift as the fleeting shades upon the golden corn.

What valour, what distinguish'd worth,
From thee shall lead the coming ages forth?
Crested helms and shining shields,
Warriors fam'd in foreign fields;
Hoary heads with olive bound,
Kings and lawgivers renown'd;
Crowding still they rise anew,
Beyond the reach of deep prophetic view.
Young Augustus! never cease!
Pledge of our present and our future peace,
Still pour the blessings forth, and give thy great increase.
All the stock that fate ordains
To supply succeeding reigns,
Whether glory shall inspire,
Gentler arts or martial fire,
Still the fair descent shall be
Dear to Albion, all, like thee,
Patrons of righteous rules, and foes to tyranny.

Ye golden lights who shine on high,
Ye potent planets who ascend the sky,
On the opening year dispense
All your kindest influence;
Heavenly powers be all prepar'd
For our Carolina's guard;
Short and easy be the pains,
Which for a nation's weal the heroine sustains.
Britannia's angel, be thou near
The growing race is thy peculiar care,
Oh spread thy sacred wing above the royal fair.
George by thee was wafted o'er
To the long expected shore:
None presuming to withstand
Thy celestial armed hand,
While his sacred head to shade,
The blended cross on high thy silver shield display'd.

But, Oh! what other form divine
Propitious near the hero seems to shine!
Peace of mind, and joy serene,
In her sacred eyes are seen,
Honour binds her mitred brow,
Faith and truth beside her go,
With zeal and pure devotion bending low.
A thousand storms around her threat,
A thousand billows roar beneath her feet,
While, fix'd upon a rock, she keeps her stable seat.
Still in sign of sure defence,
Trust and mutual confidence,
On the monarch, standing by,
Still she bends her gracious eye,
Nor fears her foes' approach, while Heaven and he are nigh.

Hence then with every anxious care!
Be gone, pale Envy, and thou, cold Despair!
Seek ye out a moody cell,
Where Deceit and Treason dwell;
There repining, raging, still
The idle air with curses fill,
There blast the pathless wild, and the bleak northern hill;
There your exile vainly moan;
There, where with murmur horrid as your own,
Beneath the sweeping winds, the bending forests groan;
But thou, Hope, with smiling cheer,
Do you bring the ready year;
See the Hours! a chosen band!
See with jocund looks they stand,
All in their trim array, and waiting for command.

The welcome train begins to move,
Hope leads increase and chaste connubial love:
Flora sweet her bounty spreads,
Smelling gardens, painted meads:
Ceres crowns the yellow plain;
Pan rewards the shepherd's pain;
All is plenty, all is wealth,
And on the balmy air sits rosy-colour'd health.
I hear the mirth, I hear the land rejoice,
Like many waters, swells the pealing noise,
While to their monarch, thus, they raise the public voice:
Father of thy country, hail!
Always everywhere prevail;
Pious, valiant, just and wise,
Better suns for thee arise,
Purer breezes fan the skies,
Earth in fruits and flowers is drest,
Joy abounds in every breast,
For thee thy people all, for thee the year is blest.

The genuine popularity of the Prince-Regent had made the task of this New Year's Ode comparatively easy, but it was not so easy to devise compliments for the less popular king, on the more directly personal occasion of his birthday. The 'Song for the King's Birthday, May 28, 1716', is typical of the devices to which the laureate was driven on the few occasions on which he could perform his appointed task.

SONG

For the King's Birth-Day, May 28, 1716.

Lay thy flowery garlands by,
  Ever-blooming gentle May!
Other honours now are nigh;
  Other honours see we pay.
Lay thy flowery garlands by, etc.

  Majesty and great renown
  Wait thy beamy brow to crown,
  Parent of our hero, thou,
  George on Britain didst bestow.
  Thee the trumpet, thee the drum,
  With the plumy helm become.
  Thee the spear and shining shield,
With every trophy of the warlike field.

Call thy better blessings forth,
  For the honour of his birth:
Still the voice of loud commotion,
  Bid complaining murmurs cease,
Lay the billows of the ocean,
  And compose the land in peace.
  Call thy better, etc.

  Queen of odours, fragrant May,
  For this boon, this happy day,
  Janus with the double face,
  Shall to thee resign his place,
  Thou shalt rule with better grace;
  Time from thee shall wait his doom,
And thou shalt lead the year for every age to come.

  Fairest month! in Caesar pride thee,
    Nothing like him canst thou bring,
  Though the graces smile beside thee:
    Though thy bounty gives the Spring.

Though like Flora thou array thee,
Finer than the painted bow;
Carolina shall repay thee
All thy sweetness, all thy show.

She herself a glory greater
Than thy golden sun discloses;
And her smiling offspring sweeter
Than the bloom of all thy roses.

The music for this Ode, as for all Rowe's Birthday Odes, was written by John Eccles, Master of His Majesty's Music.[1]

At about the same time, Rowe had the doubtful pleasure of seeing his new title displayed for the first time upon the title-page of a collected volume of his poems, issued by the piratical Curll: 'The Poetical Works of Nicholas Rowe, Esq., Poet Laureat to His Majesty, Printed for E. Curll, at the Dial and Bible against St. Dunstan's Church in Fleet Street.' The volume has apparently disappeared, but it was advertised in contemporary papers, and included in several lists of 'Books Lately Published', appended to 1716 issues of Curll's press.[2]

In addition to his New Year and Birthday Odes, most of which may be found in Chalmers's *English Poets*,[3] Rowe produced one other eulogy during his laureateship, a poem *On Walpole's Recovery*, with a prefatory tribute to Sir Samuel Garth, who had attended Walpole during his illness.[4] He also established an interesting point of contact with one of his successors by contributing a prologue denouncing Jacobitism to Colley Cibber's *Non-Juror*[5] (Drury Lane,

[1] 'New Musick just published—The Songs and Symphonies made for his Majesty's Birthday, and perform'd at the Royal Palace of St. James's, compos'd by Mr. John Eccles, Master of His Majesty's Musick' (*Evening Post*, June 2–5, 1716).

[2] For example, 'Apple-Pye, a Poem by Dr. King Now first printed from a Correct Copy', to which Curll appends a list of twenty-five 'books just published'.

[3] Vol. ix, pp. 478–80.

[4] Printed for E. Curll at the Dial and Bible . . . in Fleet Street, 1716. It is reprinted, but without the prefatory tribute, in 'A Collection of State Songs. . . . London. Printed for Andrew and William Bell at the Cross-Keys and Bible in Cornhill 1716'.

[5] 'But the Piece of all his Translations on which he most values himself is the Nonjuror . . . and for that reason had the vanity to get a Poet Laureat to write the Prologue, which Poet Laureat seems to have been infected with the Dulness of the Person he would recommend, even while he recommends him' (*The Weekly Medley*, December 26–January 2, 1719/20). The same issue reprints a long verse-satire on Rowe, entitled 'A Lash for the Laureat', published 1718; it was occasioned by the 'late insolent prologue', and condemns him for going out of his way to 'insult a foe'.

October 6, 1717). It was on the strength of this play that Cibber, according to his own statement, was subsequently given the laureateship.

Rowe's most notable work was not published until his brief career as laureate was over. The translation of Lucan which had occupied most of his time during this period was not quite complete at his death, but it was brought out in the same year by Jacob Tonson in a noble folio volume, elaborately illustrated with woodcuts, and dedicated by his wife Anne Rowe, in terms which definitely associate it with his laureateship, to the king:

'While my deceased Husband was engaged in the following long and laborious Work, he was not a little supported in it by the Honour which he proposed to himself of Dedicating it to Your Sacred Majesty. . . . When his Life was despaired of . . . he expressed to me his Desire, that this Translation should be laid at Your Majesty's Feet, as a Mark of that Zeal and Veneration which he had always entertained for Your Majesty's Royal Person and Virtues.'

The Weekly Journal of November 8, 1718, reported that 'Nicholas Rowe, Esq., Poet Laureat to His Majesty lies so dangerously ill at his House in Covent Garden that his Life is despair'd of', and frequent references in other papers during the ensuing four weeks reveal the public concern. He died on December 6, when still only in his forty-fifth year. He was buried in Westminster Abbey on December 19, and on the 27th the following statement appeared in *The Weekly Journal*: 'Yesterday was se'nnight at Night, the Corpse of the late Nicholas Rowe Esq., late Poet Laureat, was carried from Exeter Exchange by the Company of Upholsterers, and privately interr'd in Westminster Abbey, amongst those of the Poets, and close by the side of Old Parr, who was 152 years of Age when he died. The Bishop of Rochester perform'd the Funeral Service, because they were Schoolfellows at Westminster School, when Dr. Busby was their Preceptor.' *The Weekly Packet* of December 13, in announcing his death, adds: 'He was a poet of the First Rank. He had a strong masculine Fancy, and an uncommon genius for Tragedy.' But it remained for a greater poet than Rowe, and one who in general had no love for laureates, to pay him a tribute which only he could fashion:

> Thy reliques, Rowe! to this sad shrine we trust,
> And near thy Shakespeare place thy honour'd bust:
> Oh, next him, skill'd to draw the tender tear,
> For never heart felt passion more sincere;

To nobler sentiment to fire the brave,
For never Briton more disdain'd a slave.
Peace to thy gentle shade, and endless rest;
Blest in thy genius, in thy love too, blest!
And blest that timely from our scene remov'd,
Thy soul enjoys the liberty it lov'd.

It was a deserved tribute—but not for his laureate odes. Even in these, he was not altogether the 'mean poet' of Hearne's description. But no more than the rest of the eighteenth-century laureates could he escape the penalty of his position.

LAURENCE EUSDEN

Of the whole unlucky list of eighteenth-century laureates, Rowe's successor, Laurence Eusden, has fared worst with posterity. His character has been judged by the 1728 version of *The Dunciad*:

How E— lay inspired beside a sink
And to mere mortals seem'd a Priest in drink;

by the reference in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* to 'a Parson much bemus'd with beer';[1] and by Gray's remark to Mason (itself savouring of an annotation to *The Dunciad*) that 'Eusden set out well in life, but afterwards turned out a drunkard and besotted his faculties'. Yet in the authorized edition of *The Dunciad* (1729) Pope declared that 'no part' of the picture agreed with the actual character of the laureate.[2] Even in his own day Eusden was little known.

[1] Pope is enumerating those who are pestering him at Twickenham. According to Elwin-Courthope (Pope, *Works*, iii. 236), the first 157 lines of the *Epistle* were 'written as late as 1734'. As the reference to the 'Parson' occurs in line 5, Pope was writing four years after Eusden's death; and for several years before his death Eusden had lived in retirement at his rectory of Coningsby in Lincolnshire. It should be noted first, that there is no evidence that Eusden ever visited Pope at Twickenham, and, second, that, as there was no dearth of living parsons bemused with beer, Pope did not need to go out of his way to reanimate a dead one.

[2] In the authorized edition of 1729 Pope substituted Smedley (Dean of Clogher in Ireland and the author of pasquinades against Swift and Pope) for Eusden, and added: 'In the surreptitious editions, this whole episode was applied to an initial letter, E—, by whom, if they meant the Laureate, nothing was more absurd, no part agreeing with his character. The allegory evidently demands a person dipped in scandal and deeply immersed in dirty work, whereas Mr. Eusden's writings rarely offended but by their length and multitude.' In the maze of tricks and contradictions concerning *The Dunciad* in which Pope involved himself, his evidence either way is of no great value, but the disclaimer would hardly have been made, had it not been a matter of public knowledge that Eusden had a respectable character according to the standards of the day.

A contemporary describes him as

> *Eusden* a laurel'd Bard, by Fortune rais'd,
> Who has by few been read, by fewer prais'd.[1]

His work is buried in the newspapers of his day. From sheer lack of anything to say about him, he has become the elect *âme damnée* of the laureate succession.

Born in 1688, he was a graduate of Cambridge, and a Fellow and Sublector of Trinity College. In or about the year 1713 he composed and recited at a Cambridge Commencement a poem which shows a lively imagination and facility of expression. In 1714 Curll printed several of his pieces, among them a tribute to Dr. Garth, in *A New Collection of Poems . . . by the most Eminent Hands*. A number of his *jeux d'esprit* and translations of passages from the Latin poets, which may belong to this time, are included in Nichols's *Select Collection of Poems*.[2]

Meanwhile Eusden was also concerning himself with events of national importance. He had written *A Poem on the Duke of Marlborough's Victories at Oudenard*, and shortly after George I's arrival in this country he brought out *A Letter to Mr. Addison on the King's Accession to the Throne*, which pays tribute to the royal family and to most of the prominent members of the government. The poem is praised in *The Spectator*, No. 618.[3] A more direct bid for patronage was a translation (1714) into Latin of Lord Halifax's poem on the Battle of the Boyne, and a poem in English 'To Charles Lord Halifax, Occasioned by Translating into Latin Two Poems by his Lordship and Mr. Stepney'.[4] The death of Lord Halifax having cut short his hope in this direction, Eusden next produced an elaborate epithalamium on the marriage of the Duke of Newcastle to Lady Henrietta Godolphin (1717). This was a more fortunate choice, for two weeks after his marriage the young Duke was made Lord Chamberlain of the Household, and in the following year one of the offices within the gift of the Lord Chamberlain was vacant by the death of Rowe.

The St. James's Evening Post, December 6–8, announces: 'N. Rowe, Esq; one of the Land Surveyors and Poet Laureat is dead; it is said he will be succeeded in the last place by Mr. Eusden, a gentle-

[1] Thomas Cook, *The Battle of the Poets* (1729), Canto II, ll. 3, 4.

[2] 1770, vol. iv, pp. 128–63, 226–49.

[3] Eusden made several contributions to *The Spectator*, and is one of those to whom Steele acknowledges obligation in No. 555.

[4] Printed in Steele's *Miscellanies* (1714) and included in Nichols's *Select Collection*, iv. 131.

man of great learning and merit.' The same paper for December 16–18 contains the statement: 'Laurence Eusden, Esq; is made Poet Laureat, who, with Mr. Goddard and Mr. Hale, already mention'd, supply all Mr. Rowe's places.'

It may be assumed that the wisdom of the choice was not as widely recognized as when Rowe was appointed. The Duke of Buckingham's *Session of the Poets* (1719) represents Apollo as having difficulty in choosing among the candidates for the Bays, when

> In rush'd Eusden and cry'd, who shall have it
> But I, the true laureate, to whom the King gave it?
> Apollo begg'd pardon and granted his claim,
> But vow'd that till then he'd ne'er heard of his name.

Two weeks after his appointment to the office, the new laureate produced his first New Year's Ode. The ode has not been preserved, but *The St. James's Evening Post* (December 30–January 1, 1718/19) contains the following account of the occasion:

'There was a numerous appearance at Court this morning, to compliment His Majesty and the young Princesses, on the New Year. It being Collar Day, the Knights of the Garter wore the Collar of the Order; and the Duke of Richmond carried the Sword of State before the King to the Royal Chappel.

'After Divine Service, there was a Drawing Room, where a Song adapted to the Day was Sung, the Words by the Poet Laureat, Compos'd by Mr. Eccles, Master of Musick; and Sung by Mr. Hugh's, Mr. Gates and Mr. Tho. Ellis, belonging to the Royal Chappell.'

Of New Year's Day of the following year the same newspaper gives a more detailed description:

'Friday last (being New Year's Day) there was an Extraordinary Appearance of Nobility, Gentry, etc. at St. James's to wish the King a Happy New Year: His Majesty and the rest of the Knights Companions of the Most Noble Order of the Garter present, as well as those of the antient and Noble Order of the Thistle, wore the Collar of their respective Orders. In the Forenoon the King went to the Royal Chappel, the Earl of Orkney, one of the Kts. of the Thistle, carrying the Sword of State: After Prayers and an Anthem, His Majesty retired into the Drawing Room, where their Highnesses the Young Princesses were led in by the Gentlemen Ushers in waiting, followed by the Countess of Portland, their Governess, her Daughter and other Ladies of their Highnesses Court: Where a fine song on Occasion of the Day, was sung by Mr. Hughes, Mr. Gates, Gentlemen of the Chappel, and one of the Children thereof; the words by Mr. Eusden, Poet Laureat, and composed by Mr. Eccles, Master of Musick.

The Flying Post, January 2–5, gives the song as follows :

ODE FOR THE NEW YEAR, SUNG BEFORE THE KING JAN. 1, 1719–20.

Recit.

Lift up thy hoary Head and rise,
Thou mighty Genius of this Isle !
Around thee cast thy wond'ring Eyes,
See all thy Albion smile.
Mirth's Goddess her blest Pow'r maintains ;
In Cities, Courts, and Rural Plains
Brunswick, the Glorious Brunswick reigns !

Air.

Now forbear, forbear to languish,
Cheerful rouse from needless Anguish ;
For Pleasures now are ever growing,
Tho' thy kind Eyes were once o'erflowing
Our too impending Dangers knowing.
The Days, the Nights were spent in groaning,
Poor Britannia's Fate bemoaning.

Recit.

Let the young dawning Year a George resound,
A George's Fame can fill its spacious Round !
Here every Virtue pleas'd thou may'st behold
Which rais'd a Hero to a God of old ;
To form this One, the mix'd Ideas draw
From Edward, Henry, and the Lov'd Nassau. . . .

Chorus.

Genius ! Now securely rest,
For we now are ever blest ;
Thou thy Guardianship may'st spare,
Britain is a Brunswick's Care.

From this time until his death in 1730, we find Eusden's New Year's Odes regularly and his Birthday Odes occasionally printed in the papers. He survived the sovereign under whom he had been appointed, and found himself laureate to George II. Two imposing productions, *A Poem Sacred to the Immortal Memory of the late King* and *A Poem on the happy Succession and Coronation of His present Majesty*,[1] mark the transition. They are in the usual vein of elaborate panegyric, and need not be quoted in full, but one passage from the

[1] In *Three Poems* (J. Roberts, 1727).

second is worth noting, as evidence of the laureate's continued interest in his *Alma Mater*. One of the earliest acts of George I had been to present to the University the library of Bishop Moore of Ely, and later in his reign the king had interested himself in the projected Senate House in Cambridge. The building was in process of construction when Eusden penned these words:

> Listen !—Thy *Cambridge* Thee attempts to sing !
> Thee, once her fav'rite Duke ! Thee, now her fav'rite King !
> Ah ! check'd by Sorrows, she attempts in vain ;
> Lost is her Voice, and languid is her Strain !
> When wilt Thou, present, her learn'd Mansions bless,
> Chear each pal'd Grove, and gild each gloom'd Recess ?
> When shall she sudden, with a sweet Surprize,
> Turn from thy beamy Face her dazl'd Eyes,
> And hear Thee bid thy Sire's, and Thy *Lycaeum* rise ?
>
> Be still the same ! Still Glory's Paths pursue !
> Improve the noble Plan, Thy Father drew !
> He, He alone could *Europe*'s Peace design,
> Alone to perfect *Europe*'s Peace is Thine !
> Thus the *Jessëan* Monarch, in his Thought,
> Of the first Temple the bright Model wrought ;
> Then stor'd Materials, gorgeous to behold,
> Cedars, and Gems, and massy Bars of Gold !
> The good, old King could go no farther on ;
> Heav'n had decreed that Glory to his Son :
> A Dome, un-rival'd, claim'd th' un-rival'd *Solomon* !

In addition to his royal odes, the laureate wrote a few poems on events of varying importance. The most important of these is *The Origin of the Knights of the Bath, Humbly Inscribed to His Royal Highness, Prince William Augustus* (1725).[1]

During the course of his laureateship, Eusden took orders and became chaplain to Lord Willoughby de Broke, and subsequently rector of Coningsby in Lincolnshire—where, some years later, John Dyer wrote *The Fleece*. From this retired spot he continued to send his odes for performance at court, until toward the end of the year 1730. His death is said to have occurred on September 27,[2] but when

[1] William Augustus was the third son of the Prince of Wales, afterwards George II. The occasion for the laureate's poem was the revival of the Order of the Bath, May 27, 1725, when William Augustus was nominated first Knight. Eusden's account of the origin is purely fanciful, and is put forward as the Muse's substitute,

> Where Selden, Dugdale, Ashmole, Anstis fail.

[2] *Notes and Queries*, 5th series, xii. 336.

the king's birthday was celebrated on October 30, and the ode which the laureate had sent was duly performed, no news of his death had appeared in the papers.[1] A few stanzas of this ode, as printed by *The Daily Post Boy*, November 2, 1730, will serve to round off the record of Eusden's activities as laureate.

ODE

FOR THE BIRTHDAY, OCT. 30, 1730.

Recitative.

Of old the Bards their Countries to adorn,
Soar'd far from the Pierian Grove,
And still began their Songs from Jove;
No mighty Hero then was born,
But they could trace
From Heaven his Race
And tell what Wonders sign'd the happy Morn. . . .

While soothing Poets sound in lofty Odes
Their deathless Heroes, and their earthly Gods,
No Fiction the great Line of Brunswick needs,
But shines, tho' mortal, with immortal Deeds:
Brunswick was born (let true Historians write)
For the World's freedom and Mankind's Delight.

Air.

Happy Happy, without Measure,
Albion, round thee circles Pleasure:
Spicy Stores both Indies send Thee;
Peace and Plenteous Crops attend Thee;
Lost are names of Whig and Tory,
All to bless is Brunswick's Glory.

On the day after the laureate's last ode was performed at court *The Universal Spectator* of October 31, 1730, publishes the first news of his death: 'On Thursday came Advice of the Death of the Rev. Mr. Lawrence Eusden, Poet Laureat to His Majesty and lately Chaplain to the Right Honourable Richard Lord Willoughby de Broke, at his Living in the County of Lincoln.'

There were no tributes such as the death of Rowe evoked. Rowe

[1] 'This Day there was a Rehearsal in the Bell Tavern in King Street, Westminster, of the Musick composed for his Majesty's Birthday, both vocal and instrumental: the former by Laurence Eusden, Esq; Poet-Laureat, and the latter composed by Mr. Eccles' (*The Whitehall Evening Post*, October 27–29, 1730).

was a Londoner, a clever member of a brilliant group, a man of position and ability, a figure in the life of the town. Eusden was a mere name, appearing in the newspapers twice a year when New Year's Day and the King's birthday came round, and, between whiles, so remote that the news of his death took a month to get to London. And as for the odes, no doubt Oldmixon[1] was right in finding 'as much of the Ridiculum and Fustian in them as can well be jumbled together'. But, after all, what birthday odes, done to order, were ever anything else? The lot of an eighteenth-century laureate was hard enough at best. It is wilful cruelty to pick out Eusden for special damnation.

COLLEY CIBBER

At the death of Eusden, a number of claimants presented themselves for the laurel. Conspicuous among them were Theobald, whose *Shakespeare Restored* had provoked Pope into making him the hero of *The Dunciad*; Johnson's friend, Richard Savage, who subsequently obtained a pension from Queen Caroline on condition of celebrating her birthday annually by an ode, and assumed the title of 'Volunteer Laureate'; John Dennis, the critic; Stephen Duck, the Wiltshire farm labourer; and Colley Cibber.

Of these, Duck seemed for a time to be the most promising candidate. Several weeks before the news of Eusden's death reached London, the newspapers had contained this advertisement:

'Yesterday was publish'd the Sixth Edition of Poems on Several Subjects. Written by Stephen Duck, lately a poor Thresher in a Barn in the County of Wilts, at the Wages of 4*s*. 6*d*. per Week; which were publickly read by the Right Honourable the Earl of Macclesfield, in the Drawing Room at Windsor Castle, on Friday the 11th of September, 1730, to Her Majesty, who was graciously pleas'd to take the Author into her Royal Protection, by allowing him a Salary of 30 l. per Ann. and a small House at Richmond in Surrey to live in, for the better Support of himself and family. Printed for J. Roberts near the Oxford Arms in Warwick Lane, and sold by the Booksellers of London and Westminster.'[2]

On October 31, *The Weekly Register* notes: 'Certain Advice of the Death of the Rev. Mr. Laurence Eusden, His Majesty's Poet Laureat,

[1] According to Theophilus Cibber, Oldmixon had coveted the laurel for himself on the death of Rowe; see the life of Eusden in Cibber's *Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1753, vol. iv, p. 194. Oldmixon's diatribe may be found in his *Arts of Logick and Rhetorick*, London, 1728, pp. 413–14.

[2] *St. James's Evening Post*, October 1–3, 1730.

being arriv'd, we are credibly inform'd that he will be succeeded, as Poet Laureat, by that surprising Genius, Mr. Stephen Duck, the Wiltshire Thresher.'[1] On November 19, Swift writes to Gay, from Dublin: 'The vogue of our few honest folk here is that Duck is absolutely to succeed Eusden in the laurel.' Meanwhile the candidature of Cibber was becoming known. *The Grub Street Journal* of November 19 publishes the following warning:

> Behold! ambitious of the British Bays
> C—r and Duck contend in Rival Lays;
> But, gentle Colley, should thy verse prevail,
> Thou hast no Fence, alas, against his Flail;
> Wherefore thy Claim resign, allow his Right;
> For Duck can thresh, you know, as well as write.

The St. James's Evening Post for October 29–31 contains a more formal statement: 'We hear that Mr. Cibber opposes Mr. Stephen Duck for the Place of Poet Laureat to His Majesty, vacant by the Death of Mr. Eusden.' From this time Colley's star is clearly in the ascendant. Says *The Weekly Register* for December 5: 'The Town very well knows Mr. C—r has wrote well, acted better, and at this Hour understands the Laws of the Stage the best of any man in England. Who therefore who has the least spark of Gratitude or good Nature in him can read the repeated pitiful Invectives of the Grubs against him with any tolerable Patience? Give me leave to tell them, Duck, tho' warm'd with the sunshine of the Court, is no formidable Rival, and that the old Gentleman has still good blood in his veins and lives under no Apprehensions of being *thresh'd*.' The *Register* was needlessly concerned, however; the matter was already settled, and the Wiltshire thresher had lost the race.[2] *Appleton's Weekly Journal* of the same date (Friday) announces: 'On Thursday Colley Cibber Esq; the famous Comedian and Comic Author, was at Court, and had the Honour to Kiss His Majesty's Hand (on his being appointed Poet Laureat in the Room of the Rev. Mr. Laurence Eusden, Deceased) and was graciously received.'

Colley Cibber was a successful actor and theatrical manager and had produced several lively comedies. One of these, *The Non-Juror*,

[1] The same paper, by the way, marks the fulfilment of the Queen's promise: 'The Hermitage, now building in Richmond Park by Her Majesty's Order, is to be given to Mr. Stephen Duck, the celebrated Wiltshire Poet, for his Residence.'

[2] Duck was consoled, a little later, by being appointed a yeoman of the Guard to Queen Caroline.

had satirized the Jacobites, and for this service, though thirteen years had now passed since the play was written, the Lord Chamberlain (the Duke of Grafton) appointed Cibber to the laureateship.

From this time to his death in 1757, at the age of eighty-six, Cibber punctually produced his annual New Year and Birthday Odes. His long service, covering as it does the whole central period of the eighteenth century, his personal idiosyncrasies and the laughter which attended his course from year to year, would have made him conspicuous in any case, but the genius of Pope singled him out to remain for all time as the example of the degradation of the laureateship. It was the Goddess Dullness herself who raised him

> To the last honors of the Butt and Bays,

now that

> . . . Eusden thirsts no more for sack or praise.

'Dukes and butchers join' to weave his laurel crown, and his first New Year's Ode echoes, to the proper choral accompaniment, the praises of King Colley:

> . . . Then swells the Chapel royal throat—
> 'God save King Cibber!' mounts in every note.
> Familiar White's, 'God save King Colley!' cries:
> 'God save King Colley!' Drury-lane replies: . . .
> Back to the Devil the last echoes roll,
> And 'Coll!' each butcher roars at Hockley-hole.

'January 1. Their Majesties receiv'd the Compliments of the Nobility for the New-Year. . . . At the same time the Ode for the Day, composed by *Colley Cibber*, Esq; Poet Laureate, was perform'd; the Musick by Mr *Eccles*, and the vocal by Mr *Hughs*, Mr *Gates*, &c. . . .' so reads a characteristic item in the 'Monthly Intelligencer' of *The Gentleman's Magazine* for January 1731. And thus does King Colley inaugurate his reign:

Recitativo.

> Once more the ever circling Sun
> Thro' the cælestial signs has run,
> Again old Time inverts his glass,
> And bids the annual Seasons pass:
> The youthful Spring shall call for birth,
> And glad with op'ning flow'rs the Earth:
> Fair Summer load with Sheaves the Field,
> And Golden Fruit shall Autumn yield:
> Each to the Winter's want their store shall bring,
> 'Till warmer genial Suns recall the Spring.

Air.

Ye grateful *Britons* bless the Year,
That kindly yields increase,
While plenty that might feed a War,
Enjoys the guard of peace,
Your plenty to the Skies you owe,
Peace is your Monarch's care,
Thus bounteous *Jove* and *George* below
Divided empire share.

Recitativo.

Britannia pleas'd, looks round her realms to see
Your various causes of Felicity!
(To glorious War, a glorious peace succeeds:
For most we triumph when the Farmer feeds)
Then truly are we great when truth supplies
Our Blood, our Treasures drain'd by victories,
Turn happy *Britons,* to the throne your Eyes,
And in the royal offspring see
How amply bounteous providence supplies
The source of your Felicity.

Air.

Behold in ev'ry Face imperial Graces shine
All native to the Race of *George* and *Caroline*
In each young Hero we admire
The blooming virtues of his sire;
In each maturing fair we find
Maternal charms of softer kind.

Recitativo.

In vain thro' ages past has *Phoebus* roll'd
E're such a sight blest *Albion* could behold.
Thrice happy Mortals, if your state you knew,
Where can the Globe so blest a nation shew?
All that of you indulgent Heav'n requires,
Is loyal Hearts, to reach your own Desires.
Let Faction then her self born views lay down,
And Hearts United, thus Address the Throne.

Air.

Hail! Royal *Caesar,* hail!
Like this may ev'ry annual Sun
Add brighter Glories to thy Crown,
'Till Suns themselves shall fail.

Recitativo.

May heav'n thy peaceful Reign prolong,
Nor let to thy great Empires wrong,
Foreign or native Foes prevail.
Hail, &c.

Upon this ode, *The Grub Street Journal* for January 14, 1731, remarks that 'when a song is good sense, it must be made nonsense before it is made musick; so when a song is nonsense, there 's no other way but by singing it to make it seem tolerable sense.'

With this first ode, too, begins the steady stream of burlesque which was to flow around the laureate during all his twenty-seven years. The first satirist to get in a blow was, appropriately enough, one of his disappointed rivals for the laureateship. This was Stephen Duck,[1] who was afterward to salve his disappointment by constituting himself unofficial poet laureate to Queen Caroline. Duck's parody is certainly livelier than the original.

ODE HUMBLY INSCRIBED TO THE POET LAUREATE
BY STEPHEN DUCK, ESQ.[2]

Semel in anno ridet Apollo.

Recitativo.

Accept, *O Cibber*, the advent'rous lay,
Which, to your honour, dares both sing and say;
To you, great Prince of Comedy and Song,
The Tributes of inferior Pens belong;
You, who by royal Favour wear the Bays,
And grateful eternize our Monarch's Praise.

Air.

Let us sing to the King,
All about the circling Year:

[1] When a successor to Eusden was being considered by the court, a wit of the time delivered himself as follows:

Shall royal praise be rhymed by such a ribbald
As fopling Cibber, or attorney Tibbald?
Let 's rather wait one year for better luck;
One year may make a singing swan of Duck.
Great George! such servants since thou well canst lack,
Oh, save the salary and drink the sack.

A number of Duck's Birthday Odes to Queen Caroline found their way into contemporary periodicals, and were subsequently included among his *Poems on Several Occasions*, 1736.

[2] Printed in *The London Evening Post* of January 7, 1731, and reprinted in *The Gentleman's Magazine*.

Sing a *floreat* to the *laureat*:
Ev'ry Season brings good cheer,
Grateful *Britons*, thank the bard
Who by Peace does plenty guard,
Such as hungry War does need,
War, that does on plenty feed.

Recitativo.

Phœbus with joy looks *Britain* round to see
The happy state of his lov'd Poetry,
To *Eusden*, *Cibber* gloriously succeeds;
Wit triumphs most when bard like farmer feeds;
Then truly are we great when he can shew
The way *his own out-doings to out-do*.[1]
Cast, envious Poets, on his Verse your Eyes,
Behold the offspring of his brain,
How his rich Genius constantly supplies
The source of his poetick vein!

Air.

Thro'out the whole what matchless graces shine!
Paraphonalia sparkles in each Line;
Native to *Cibber*, we admire
The style and fancy, wit and fire;
In each maturing Word we find
Something soft for thought design'd.

Recitativo.

Complain not Sol, of fruitless ages past,
Think your self blest in such a Son at last:
Thrice happy Poets, if you knew your state;
Britain alone can boast a *Laureate*.
For if, like him, to Grandeur you aspire,
By his Example reach your own desire.
Let criticks then their self-born views lay down,
And Bards in chorus thus sing round the town.

Air.

Hail! Matchless *Colley*, hail!
Like this may ev'ry New Year's Day
Add fresher Honour to the Bay,
'Till Bay itself shall fail.

[1] Quoted from Cibber's preface to *The Provoked Husband*. In the *Apology*, Cibber himself cites the phrase as an instance of his extravagance of speech.

Recitativo.

May Heaven preserve thy Genius clear,
For *Christmas* comes but once a Year;
  Give the Poet then some Ale.
  Ale, &c.

In the following year, Cibber succeeded in 'outdoing his past outdoings' in a Birthday Ode (October 28, 1732), which afforded a plaything for the wits for many a month thereafter. It set a standard of banality and of fulsome flattery which not even Cibber himself could surpass in all his subsequent opportunities.

Let there be light!
Such was at once the word and work of heav'n,
  When from the void of universal night
  Free nature sprung to the Creator's sight,
And day to glad the new-born world was giv'n.

Succeeding days to ages roll'd,
And ev'ry age some wonder told:
At length arose this glorious morn!
  When, to extend his bounteous pow'r,
  High heav'n announc'd this instant hour
The best of monarchs shall be born!

  Born to protect and bless the land!
And while the laws his people form,
His scepter glories to confirm
  Their wishes are his sole command.

The word that form'd the world
  In vain did make mankind;
Unless, his passions to restrain,
  Almighty wisdom had design'd
Sometimes a WILLIAM, or a GEORGE should reign.
Yet farther, *Britons*, cast your eyes,
Behold a long succession rise
Of future fair felicities.

  Around the royal table spread,
See how the beauteous branches shine!
  Sprung from the fertile genial bed
Of glorious GEORGE and CAROLINE.

  While heav'n with bounteous hand
Has so enrich'd her store;
  When shall this promis'd land
In royal heirs be poor?
  All we can further ask, or heav'n bestow,
  Is, that we long this happiness may know.

While o'er our vanquish'd hearts alone
Our peaceful prince would greatly reign
He bids obedience to his throne,
And haughty *Britain* hugs her chain.

Her jealous sons, in GEORGE secure,
A happier state than freedom boast;
For while his kind commands allure,
Freedom in hearts resign'd is lost.

Sing, joyous *Britons*, sing
The glorious natal day,
That gave, with such a king,
So great, so mild a sway.

Chorus. His realms around
Diffuse the sound!
From ports to fleets the jovial cannon play,
'Till ev'ry peaceful shoar
Receives the rolling roar,
And joins the joy that crowns the day.

Among the many burlesques which this ode evoked, one deserves reprinting, not merely because of its success in turning Cibber's words upon himself, but also on other grounds.

Let there be light!
Such was th' Almighty's, such the Laureate's phrase;
When from the void of his unthinking head,
Free Dullness (PALLAS-like) with native lead,
Arose *to glad* his heavy labour'd lays.

Succeeding songs to odes then *roll'd*,
And every ode surpass'd the *old*;
At length conspicuous o'er the rest,
The laureat *to extend his* pow'r
Appointed for this *instant hour*,
At once the dullest and *the best.*

The best that e're did *bless the land!*
And while such nonsence he can *form*,
Her scepter glories to confirm:
The throne of Dullness firm will stand.

The Word that form'd the world
Too grave *had made mankind*,
Unless, his laughter to constrain,
Almighty wisdom had design'd
Sometimes a C——R *should* a laureat *reign.*
Yet further, Britons, cast your eyes,
Behold a long succession rise
Of future dull stupidities!

See, when his *table*-cloth is *spread*,
The worthy son of such a sire,
Sprung from a fertile genial bed,
And grac'd with all his father's fire!

While heav'n with bounteous hand,
Has so enrich'd her store;
When shall this promis'd land
In nonsense e'er *be poor?*
All we can further ask, or heaven bestow,
Is, that we long may such a laureat *know.*

While o'er our vanquish'd hearts alone
Dullness (great queen!) *would greatly reign*,
She binds old C——y *to* her *throne*,
And C——y *hugs* the leaden *chain.*

Her jealous sons, in her *secure*,
A happier state than wisdom *boast;*
For while her *kind commands allure*,
Wisdom *in hearts resign'd is lost.*

Sound, Grub-street, sound the blast,
This is the day alone,
In which the laureat has his past
Outdoings all outdone.

Chorus. Gin-shops around
Diffuse the sound!
From cells *to* garrets stun us with the noise.
Shake, shock, and rend the *shoar*,
Revive *the rolling roar!*
And halloo laureat C——r, boys.

The special interest of this burlesque lies in its anticipation of Pope[1] in establishing King Colley upon the throne of Dullness. In the version of *The Dunciad* familiar to readers in the year 1732, Theobald occupied that bad eminence and Cibber passed unscathed. Pope, however, had harboured a grudge against Cibber since the year 1718, when Cibber in playing *The Rehearsal* had introduced a jest on *Three Hours after Marriage*, a play in which Pope had had a share. After Cibber's elevation to the laureateship Pope's contempt found vent in occasional allusions, notably in the *Imitations of Horace*

[1] Or is there a possibility that Pope may have had a hand in it? It was published in *The Grub Street Journal*, with the editorship of which Pope seems to have been connected. It was reprinted in *The Gentleman's Magazine* for November 1732.

(1733–7).[1] To these, Cibber made a good-humoured and surely unprovocative reference in his *Apology* (1740): 'Not our great imitator of Horace himself can have more pleasure in writing his verses, than I have in reading them, though I sometimes find myself there (as Shakespeare terms it) dispraisingly spoken of; if he is a little free with me, I am generally in good company—he is as blunt with my betters; so that even here I might laugh in my turn. My superiors may be mended by him; but for my part, I own myself incorrigible.'

Pope's rejoinder to this harmless pleasantry was to picture Cibber in the new *Dunciad* (1742), but still only casually, as reclining on the lap of the Goddess, and to comment on the *Apology* in the footnotes. But now Cibber aroused the satirist's smouldering wrath to flame by his first *Letter to Mr. Pope* (1742), in which he told the story of the old quarrel over *Three Hours after Marriage*, and added an anecdote associating Pope with an episode of the stews. Pope thereupon revised the entire *Dunciad*, dethroned Theobald, and installed Cibber upon the throne of the Dunces.[2]

The general view of the injudiciousness of Pope's substitution of Cibber for Theobald is thus expressed by Leslie Stephen: 'He dethroned Theobald, who, as a plodding antiquarian, was an excellent exponent of dulness, and installed Cibber in his place, who might be a representative of folly, but was as little of a dullard as Pope himself. The consequent alterations make the hero of the poem a thoroughly incongruous figure, and greatly injure the general design.'[3]

But it was the Cibber of 1743 whom Pope established on the throne of Dullness. Shortly after his appointment to the laureateship, he had formally retired from the stage, though he made a few appearances thereafter. For thirteen years before the revised *Dunciad* came

[1] Then all your Muses softer art display,
Let Carolina smooth the tuneful lay,
Lull with Amelia's liquid name the Nine
And sweetly flow through all the royal line.
Alas! few verses touch their nicer ear;
They scarce can bear their laureate twice a year;
And justly Caesar scorns the poet's lays:
It is to history he trusts for praise.
Satire I, *Imitations of Horace*.

[2] In the ninth chapter of the *Apology*, Cibber makes a remark which was unconsciously prophetic: 'However, even my Dulness will find somebody to do it right; if my Reader is an ill-natur'd one, he will be as much pleased to find me a Dunce in my old Age, as possibly he may have been, to prove me a brisk Blockhead in my Youth.'

[3] *Life of Pope* (English Men of Letters), p. 135.

out, it was the Cibber of the semi-annual laureate odes who was in the public eye, and anything duller than these twenty-six effusions it would be hard to find. For almost as many years the wits had followed the cue of the burlesque ode of 1732, in which 'Dulness . . . binds old Colley to her throne'. When, therefore, Pope cast *The Dunciad* in its final form, dethroned Theobald, and exalted Cibber, he was but putting Cibber in the place which the laureate's odes and a dozen years' jest about them had prepared for him.

From the absurd Birthday Ode of 1732, to 1757, when 'old Colley' passed away at the ripe age of eighty-six, there was nothing to lessen his qualifications for the throne of Dullness. To quote any more of the odes in their entirety would be to repeat the same inane and fulsome flatteries phrased in the same way, but it may not be amiss to reprint one of the later Birthday Odes for the sake of the light which it throws upon the manner of their production at court.

ODE *for His Majesty's Birth-Day*, 1741.

By Colley Cibber, *Esq; Poet-Laureate; set to Musick by Dr* Green.

Recitativo, by Mr Bayley.

To thee, great GEORGE, the Sons of Liberty,
In vocal Joys their Vows address,
For past and present Happiness.

Air, by Mr Bayley.

George, our Faith and Rights defending,
Gives to god-like Glory Grace;
Freedom, on his Sway depending,
Blends with War the Joy of Peace.
Constant in a due Obedience,
Britons find him great and just:
Thus Protection and Allegiance
Glory in a mutual Trust.

Recitativo, by the Rev. Mr Abbot.

For Wrongs receiv'd when Honour calls,
See, Britons *crush* defended walls:
Or when the Spirit soars too high,
Behold, like Heroes, how they die!
Success on Heav'n depends: *To be victorious,*
Not less than to deserve it can be glorious.

Air, by the Rev. Mr Abbot.

Tho' *now suspending Fate*
Enjoins them milder Suns to wait,
The *floating Lyon yet shall roar,*
Again shall shake the *Indian* Shore;
Again shall Britain's *injur'd Right*
Make Arms and Danger her Delight.

Recitativo, by a Boy of the Chapel Royal.

Her Isle, by Nature form'd for War,
The Load of Arms, ungriev'd, can bear.

Air, by a Boy of the Chapel Royal.

Her Fleets, that now the Seas command,
Were late *upon her Forests growing;*
Her wholsome Stores, for every Band,
As late within her *Fields were sowing.*
While thus the Means for Naval Arms
The Product of her Land suffices,
What then she wastes supports her Farms,
From new Demands new Profit rises.

Recitativo, by the Rev. Mr Abbot

Yet *not Ambition, but his Cause,*
The righteous Sword of *Cæsar* draws.

Chorus.

While thus *our Master of the* Main
Revives Eliza's glorious Reign,
The great *Plantagenets* look down,
And see *your* Race adorn your Crown.[1]

The manner of performance illustrated in this ode seems to have prevailed throughout them all. In most instances the ode was set to music by the 'Master of his Majesty's Band of Musick', and we may assume that the 'Boys of the Chapel Royal' regularly played their part in the chorus, air, and recitative. In the New Year's Ode for 1751 Cibber varied the enduring monotony of his song by putting it in the form of a 'Dialogue between Fame and Virtue' ('Fame to be sung by Mr. Beard, Virtue to be sung by Mr. Savage'), but the variation of form inspired the laureate to no novelty of substance.

No device known to human ingenuity, indeed, could have saved Cibber from exhausting his stock of compliments to a monarch as

[1] *The Gentleman's Magazine,* October 1741.

colourless as George II, long before the laureate's twenty-seven years of ode-making had expired. Some of these compliments would be taken for irony if another poet had penned them. To say of a king with the soul of a drill-sergeant and a mind incapable of rising above the merest details of business :

> Whose regal state and pomp, we find
> Receive their glory from his mind

is to be either bitterly ironical or hopelessly fulsome, and unfortunately Cibber cannot profit by the alternative. It was the eternal sameness of Cibber's compliments which inspired a contemporary satirist to suggest that he should vary his round of New Year and Birthday Odes by an ode on the marriage of Princess Anne with the Prince of Orange :

> Let Cibber add new beauties to his muse
> And dress her feet in orange-colored shoes.
> May he excite as much surprising mirth
> On day of Marriage as on days of Birth !
> Or rather, having lavished all his store
> On birthday sonnets, and in numbers poor,
> His fancy on the stoop, and drained of verse,
> Let him his huge, harmonious sack-butt pierce ;
> Make bridal-possets and supply the lack
> Of luscious ode with matrimonial sack.

It might be expected that the official poet of the court and inferentially of the nation would have found in the political events of twenty-seven shifting years an ample variety of theme, but Cibber stuck to his last and was chary of politics. The lull in international strife at the beginning of his laureateship is characterized in language cacophonous enough to frighten the peace-dove from her perch :

> Europe now of bleeding wounds
> Sadly shall no more complain.
> George the jars of jealous crowns
> Heals with halcyon days again.

The attitude of the Hanoverian monarch toward the Austrian crisis of 1742 finds proper expression :

> What Austria's due support demands
> George and his Senate shall supply ;[1]

and so on, through a variety of perfunctory echoes. In the rare instances when he turns from these vaguenesses and tries to particu-

[1] War of the Austrian Succession, 1740–8. Grants of money were made by Parliament to aid the Austrians.

larize, he produces remarkable results. The Birthday Ode of 1743 with its roll of 'uncouth' battle-names might be a study in the mock-heroic:

Recitativo.

Of fields! Of forts! and floods! unknown to fame,
That now demand of *Cæsar's* arms a name,
Sing, *Britons!* tho' uncouth the sound.

Air.

Tho' rough Selingenstadt
The harmony defeat,
Tho' *Klein Ostein*
The verse confound;
Yet, in the joyful strain,
Aschaffenburgh or *Dettingen*[1]
Shall charm the ear they seem to wound.

Occasionally the steady stream of flattery is interrupted by a reference to internal affairs. If Parliament is about to assemble, Cibber writes as solemnly as a court chaplain:

Oh, may his opening Senate's voice
Deserve the dignity of choice,
When power or liberty are weighed
May Wisdom hold the balance even!
May neither Nature rights invade,
Nor, heated, to extremes be driven.
So fruitless Faction shall her views give o'er
Nor envy Loyalty the toil of power.

But he is careful to eschew controversial topics. For example, New Year's Day of 1732 found him advising his countrymen (in language which the ever-ready satirists of *The Grub Street Journal* delighted to annotate) to be prompt in supplying the needs of the royal treasury:

Your annual aid when he desires,
Less the King than land requires;
All the dues to him that flow
Are still but Royal wants to you;

but Walpole's excise scheme of the following year found no echo in the official ode. Of this a contemporary satirist was pleased to remind

[1] Victories gained by a combined army of English, Hanoverians, Hessians, Austrians, and Dutch under the command of King George II. The battle of Dettingen was the last occasion when an English king actually took part in a battle.

him in 'An Ode or Ballad supposed to be written by C— C— Esq; Poet Laureat':

> Like a cricket each winter I *sing*,
> *Sing, sing*, in the same tuneful strain;
> Nor touch on *excise*' jarring string,
> But leave that to the Jacobite train.[1]

An anthology of the burlesques, satires, and parodies on the laureate written between 1730 and 1757 would fill a sizable volume, for Cibber has the unenviable distinction of having been more abundantly (and it may be added more scurrilously) ridiculed than any other holder of the title. This was due largely to the patent worthlessness of his odes and to his personal lack of dignity; but it was due in some measure also to the circumstances of his time. Every laureate, by the very nature of his office, is peculiarly exposed to the gibes of his fellow wits, but Cibber held his appointment at a court which it was the fashion to satirize. Walpole's opinion that every man in it had his price, seems to have been widely shared. The enemies of King George were frank in their language. A writer in *The Craftsman*, for example, describes the court (1733) as 'an assembly of Prostitutes, Pensioners, Preferment-hunters, Boy-politicians and Court-slaves', and any man who drew a pension from a court which could be thus described, would have fared badly with the satirists for producing a semi-annual compliment to it, even if his effusions had had poetic merit. But nature, as Johnson said, 'formed the Poet for that King'. Nowhere else do we find

> A king so praised in so be-mused a town,
> With such a laureat to insure renown.

And yet, time-server and poetaster as he was, there is something to be said in Cibber's behalf. If he stooped to gross flattery, he was but following the fashion of his day. How, exclaims Pope with bitter irony,

> . . . shall the Muse, from such a monarch, steal
> An hour, and not defraud the public weal? . . .
> Oh! could I mount on the Maeonian wing
> Your arms, your actions, your repose to sing!
> What seas you traversed, and what fields you fought!
> Your country's peace, how oft, how dearly bought!
> How barbarous rage subsided at your word,
> And nations wondered while they dropped the sword!

[1] *The Gentleman's Magazine*, February 1733, p. 93.

How, when you nodded, o'er the land and deep,
Peace stole her wing, and wrapped the world in sleep;
Till earth's extremes your mediation own.
And Asia's tyrants tremble at your throne.
But verse, alas! your Majesty disdains;
And I'm not used to panegyric strains. . . .

Cibber's frankness almost disarms criticism. It may be worse to write bad poetry for twenty-seven years and be blithely aware how bad it is all the while, than to write bad poetry unwittingly. It may be worse—but at least it is more engaging. And Cibber not only knew that it was bad, but quite openly said so. 'No Man worthy the Name of an Author', he said in the *Apology*, 'is a more faulty Writer than myself; that I am not Master of my own Language, I too often feel, when I am at a loss for Expression'; and in '*The Egoist, or Colley upon Cibber*' (1743) he frankly declared that his odes were poor stuff. The ridicule which was poured out upon him on every hand he met with unshakable good humour. When a group of his friends challenged him to read some of the burlesques aloud, he not only did so, but wrote a poetical satire upon himself, in which 'Francis Fairplay' calls him a blockhead and a coxcomb, and challenges him to

Bring thy protected Verse from Court
And try it on the Stage;
There it will make much better Sport,
And set the Town in Rage.

There Beaux, and Wits, and Cits, and Smarts,
Where Hissing 's not uncivil,
Will shew their Parts to thy Deserts,
And send it to the Devil.

The lines were duly published with other burlesques upon the laureate in *The Whitehall Evening Post*, and Cibber left the poem unacknowledged until he told the whole story in the *Apology*.

The truth is, and it is not to be wondered at, that Cibber did not consider the duties of the laureateship a serious challenge to the Muse. When he took it over from Eusden, the office was a joke, and it did not occur to him to try to better it. He did not hesitate to declare that he was appointed merely because he had served the state. 'That part of the bread I now eat', he said in the *Apology*, 'was given me for having writ the *Non-Juror*', and the task of grinding out something twice a year to be sung by the boys of the Chapel Royal did not strike him as anything more than the incident of a political

sinecure. 'I wrote more to be fed than to be famous', was his frank appraisal of the situation in his 'Letter' to Pope.

Discreditable enough, to be sure; but when we condemn the old cynic, let us remember that the fault lay with the office as well as with the man.

WILLIAM WHITEHEAD

With the death of Cibber in 1757,[1] the laureateship trembled for a brief moment on the verge of redemption. That a better poet than Cibber should be appointed was certain. But that the post should have been offered to no less a poet than Thomas Gray calls for explanation. For a number of years Gray had been on intimate terms with Lord John Cavendish, whom George Selwyn called 'the learned canary-bird';[2] whom Gray called 'the best of all Johns';[3] and of whom, 'musing in the cloisters pale' of Cambridge, Mason has left a picture in the *Elegy on a Young Nobleman leaving the University*. Two years before Cibber's death, Lord John's elder brother, who was also a lover of learning, had inherited his father's title as Duke of Devonshire, and had been made Lord Chamberlain. When the laureateship was vacant in 1757, Lord John himself, acting as spokesman for his brother, offered it to Gray.[4] With commendable judgement also, the duke proposed that the annual New Year and Birthday Odes should be abolished. If Gray had accepted a post thus freed from ignominious duties, and actually conferred as a tribute to genius, and if, as poet laureate, he had brought out his two great odes of the ensuing year, *The Progress of Poesy* and *The Bard*, the laureateship would have been permanently raised beyond the reach of any mere poetaster. But Gray refused, and, in a letter to Mason, characterized the office in terms which show that not even the influence of Lord John and the duke induced him to give it serious consideration.

[1] *Lloyd's Evening Post*, December 12, 1757, notes 'the interment, in South Audley Chapel, of the remains of Colley Cibber, Esq.' It is commonly said that Cibber was buried in the Danish Church, Whitechapel. Cunningham's *London* is the source of the error. Cibber's father, Caius Gabriel Cibber, was buried in the Danish Church. See *Notes and Queries*, 1893, eighth series, pp. 131 and 298.

[2] Tovey, *Letters of Thomas Gray*, i. 265.

[3] Ibid., i. 330.

[4] The offer was communicated through Gray's friend, William Mason, who had been Lord John's tutor at Cambridge. 'His lordship had commissioned me (then in town) to write to him (Gray) concerning it' (Mason, *Memoirs of Gray*).

'Though I very well know the bland, emollient, saponaceous qualities both of sack and silver,' Gray wrote, 'yet if any great man would say to me, "I make you rat-catcher to his Majesty, with a salary of £300 a year and two butts of the best Malaga; and though it has been usual to catch a mouse or two, for form's sake, in public once a year, yet to you, sir, we shall not stand upon these things," I cannot say I should jump at it; nay, if they would drop the very name of the office and call me Sinecure to the King's Majesty, I should still feel a little awkward, and think everybody I saw smelt a rat about me; but I do not pretend to blame anyone else that has not the same sensations; for my part I would rather be sergeant-trumpeter or pin-maker to the palace. Nevertheless I interest myself a little in the history of it, and rather wish somebody may accept it that will retrieve the credit of the thing, if it be retrievable, or ever had any credit. ... The office itself has always humbled the professor hitherto (even in an age when kings were somebody), if he were a poor writer by making him more conspicuous, and if he were a good one by setting him at war with the little fry of his own profession, for there are poets little enough to envy even a poet-laureate.'

The position thus disdained by Gray was coveted by Mason himself, and, indeed, it was rumoured that it was to be offered to him,[1] but he was ultimately rejected, for the announced reason that he was in holy orders. Mason's claims, which on the basis of poetic merit were certainly worthy of consideration, were passed over in favour of William Whitehead.

He had written creditable verse and a successful tragedy, *The Roman Father*, but his appointment was based on grounds more acceptable at court. A Fellow of Clare Hall, Cambridge, he had been tutor to Lord Villiers, son of the Earl of Jersey, and travelling tutor to Viscount Nuneham, whose father, the Earl of Harcourt, was Governor to the Prince of Wales, afterwards George III. In a letter to Gray, written from Hanover in 1755, Mason says that 'Whitehead is here with his lordlings. . . . He talks rather too much of Princesses of the Blood, in a way between jest and earnest that most people must mistake and take for admiration'. Disappointed in his offer to Gray, the Duke of Devonshire seems to have lost interest in the welfare of the laureateship, and the support of two grateful and distinguished parents paved an easy way for the appointment of Whitehead.

Although the duke had been willing to make concessions to Gray, he evidently saw in Whitehead nothing more than the traditional

[1] See *Lloyd's Evening Post*, December 14, 1757: 'We hear that Mr. Mason, author of *Elfrida*, is to succeed Colley Cibber, Esq., as Poet Laureat.'

manufacturer of odes, and the regular obligation of the laureateship was allowed to remain in force. For twenty-eight years Whitehead performed his task, and, with unfailing regularity,

> . . . certain words in order set
> As innocent as a Gazette . . .
> Content with Boyce's harmony,
> Who throws on many a worthless lay
> His music and his powers away.[1]

But it would be a mistake to take Whitehead's modest appraisal too literally. His odes are far from being worthless lays, and it is like escaping from a fetid room into the fresh air to turn from Cibber's stale compliments to the performances of his successor. In truth, the first thing that strikes one about them is that the era of mere fulsomeness had, at least temporarily, passed. It is England that Whitehead cares for, not George and the court. The first ode which it fell to Whitehead's lot to write was the Birthday Ode of 1758 for the aged George II. It was the custom, naturally, to make the New Year's Ode the more general, the Birthday Ode the more personal, in its application, and Whitehead ingeniously avoided an overt break with the custom by making his first ode a versified history of the royal line. It is not distinguished poetry—the nature of the subject forbade that; but the verse is smooth and the spirit is dignified. The ode ends with a direct tribute, but it is manifestly not so much the man as the nation's king of whom Whitehead is thinking.

> But now each *Briton's* glowing tongue
> Proclaims the truths the Genius sung,
> On Brunswick's name with rapture dwells,
> And hark, the general chorus swells!
> May years on happy years roll o'er,
> Till glory close the shining page,
> And our ill-fated sons deplore
> The shortness of a *Nestor's* age!
> Hail, all hail! on *Albion's* plains
> The friend of man and freedom reigns!
> Echo waft the triumph round,
> Till *Gallia's* utmost shores rebound,
> And all her bulwarks tremble at the sound.

The same year he published a poem which stamps him as of different calibre from all the others of the eighteenth-century succession.

[1] From Whitehead's *Pathetic Apology for All Laureats, Past, Present, and to Come.*

Tate, Eusden, and Cibber before him and Pye after him were, as laureates, tame functionaries of the court. Rowe and Warton, Whitehead's immediate successor, were better poets than he was. But to none of these save Warton did it occur that a laureate might be anything but a flatterer or an echo, and Warton spent his time in dreamland.

For this once at least, Whitehead spoke out. The guerilla warfare between England and France in North America and India had been going against England. Pitt, disliked by the king, had been dismissed from power, only to be reinstated because the nation could not get on without him. He was now energizing a sluggish England, and turning defeats into victories. But king and court still disliked him and what he stood for, and it was to king and court that Whitehead owed his pension and his office. It was at this juncture that the laureate penned, in lines which make up in sincerity for what they lack in distinction, his *Verses to the People of England*:

Britons, rouse to deeds of death !—
Waste no zeal in idle breath,
Nor lose the harvest of your swords
In a civil war of words !
  Wherefore teems the shameless press
With labour'd births of emptiness ?
Reas'nings, which no facts produce,
Eloquence, that murders use ;
Ill-tim'd humour, that beguiles
Weeping idiots of their smiles ;
Wit, that knows but to defame,
And satire, that profanes the name. . . .
Give to France the honours due,
France has chiefs and statesmen too,
Breasts which patriot-passions feel,
Lovers of the common-weal.
And when such the foes we brave,
Whether on the land or wave,
Greater is the pride of war
And the conquest nobler far.
  Agincourt and Cressy long
Have flourished in immortal song ;
And lisping babes aspire to praise
The wonders of Eliza's days. . . .
  But glory which aspires to last
Leans not meanly on the past.
'Tis the present now demands
British hearts, and British hands.

Curst be he, the willing slave,
Who doubts, who lingers to be brave.
Curst be the coward tongue that dare
Breathe one accent of despair,
Cold as Winter's icy hand
To chill the genius of the land.
  Chiefly you, who ride the deep,
And bids our thunders wake or sleep
As pity pleads, or glory calls—
Monarchs of our wooden walls!
Midst your mingling seas and skies
Rise ye Blakes, ye Raleighs rise!
Let the sordid lust of gain
Be banish'd from the liberal main.
He who strikes the generous blow
Aims it at the public foe.
Let glory be the guiding star,
Wealth and honours follow her. . . .
  If protected commerce keep
Her tenour o'er yon heaving deep,
What have we from war to fear?
Commerce steels the nerves of war;
Heals the havoc rapine makes,
And new strength from conquest takes.
  Nor less at home, O deign to smile,
Goddess of Britannia's isle!
Thou, that from her rocks survey'st
Her boundless realms, the watry waste; . . .
Thou, the bulwark of our cause,
Thou, the guardian of our laws,
Sweet Liberty!—O deign to smile,
Goddess of Britannia's isle! . . .
  Goddess, all thy powers diffuse!
And thou, genuine British Muse, . . .
Bid them leave th' inglorious theme
Of fabled shade, or haunted stream.
In the daisy painted mead
It is to peace we tune the reed;
But when war's tremendous roar
Shakes the isle from shore to shore,
Every bard of purer fire,
Trytaeus-like, should grasp the lyre;
Wake with verse the hardy deed,
Or in the generous strife like Sydney bleed.

The year 1761 found a new monarch upon the throne. To a loyal England, George III, who caused it to be announced upon his accession that he 'gloried in the name of Briton', seemed far more truly their

own king than either of his Hanoverian predecessors had been, and the laureate welcomed his accession, in the first Birthday Ode, with joyful expectation :

O, called by Heaven to fill that awful throne,
Where *Edward, Henry, William, George* have shone,
(Where Love with Rev'rence, Laws with Power agree,
And 'tis each Subject's birthright to be free)
The fairest wreaths already won
Are but a prelude to the whole :
Thy arduous race is *now* begun,
And, starting from a nobler Goal,
Heroes and Kings of Ages past
Are Thy compeers : extended high
The Trump of Fame expects the blast,
The radiant Lists before Thee lie,
The Field is Time, the prize ETERNITY !
Beyond Example's bounded light
'Tis Thine to urge thy daring flight,
And heights untry'd explore :
O think what Thou alone can'st give,
What blessings *Britain* may receive
When YOUTH unites with POWER !

New Year's Day of 1763 brought the laureate two themes which he delighted to celebrate—the blessings of peace after the protracted struggle of the Seven Years War, and the birth of an heir (afterwards George IV) to King George and Queen Charlotte. The ode is worth quoting in its entirety. It is true that it is not great poetry. Any one of half a dozen poets of the time might have written it. But, as a whole, it shows, like the passages already quoted, that Whitehead wrote, not in the spirit of a fawning courtier, but in the spirit of a loyal and patriotic poet who loved the nation and wrote his odes for it and about it, and who reverenced his king as the symbol of his nation.

At length th' imperious Lord of War
Yields to the Fates their ebon car,
And frowning quits his toil :
Dash'd from his hand the bleeding spear
Now deigns a happier form to wear,
And peaceful turns the soil.
Th' insatiate Furies of his train,
Revenge, and *Hate,* and fell *Disdain,*
With heart of steel, and eyes of fire,
Who stain the sword which honour draws,
Who sully Virtue's sacred cause,
To *Stygian* depths retire.

Unholy shapes, and shadows drear,
The pallid family of *Fear*,
And *Rapine*, still with shrieks pursu'd,
And meagre *Famine's* squalid brood
Close the dire crew.—Ye eternal gates, display
Your adamantine folds, and shut them from the day!

For lo, in yonder pregnant skies
On billowy clouds the Goddess lies,
Whose presence breathes delight!
Whose power th' obsequious seasons own,
And winter loses half his frown,
And half her shades the night.
Soft-smiling PEACE, whom *Venus* bore,
When, tutor'd by th' enchanting lore
Of *Maia's* blooming Son,
She sooth'd the synod of the Gods,
Drove *Discord* from the blest abodes,
And *Jove* resum'd his throne.
Th' attendant Graces gird her round,
And sportive *Ease*, with locks unbound,
And every Muse, to leisure born,
And *Plenty*, with her twisted horn.
While changeful *Commerce* spreads his loosen'd sails,
Blow as ye list, ye winds, the reign of PEACE prevails!

And see, to grace that milder reign,
And add fresh lustre to the year,
Sweet *Innocence* adorns the train
In form, and features, Albion's heir!
A future *George*!—Propitious powers,
Ye delegates of Heaven's high king,
Who guide the years, the days, the hours
That float on Time's progressive wing,
Exert your influence, bid us know
From parent worth what virtues flow!
Be to less happy realms resign'd
The warrior's unrelenting rage,
We ask not kings of hero-kind,
The storms and earthquakes of their age.
To us be nobler blessings given:
O teach us, delegates of Heaven,
What mightier bliss from union springs!
Future subjects, future kings,
Shall bless the fair example shown,
And from our character transcribe their own:
'A people, zealous to obey;
A monarch, whose parental sway

Despises regal art ;
His shield, the laws which guard the land ;
His sword, each *Briton's* eager hand ;
His throne, each *Briton's* heart.'

The odes of the latter part of Whitehead's long period of service reflect the national mood in the face of two great issues—the rebellion of the American colonies and renewed strife in Europe. Year after year the odes sound the call to battle, condemn the ' haughty Bourbon ' and ' imperious France ', or express pained surprise that when clouds gather about England, the European nations which she has protected in the past should ' sit with folded arms ' or even ' fraudulently aid the insidious plan '. And year after year, too, the odes echo the national longing for an end of strife. ' Still does the rage of War prevail ' ; ' still does reluctant Peace refuse '—so, in varying phrase, but to like purport, begins ode after ode. The desire to avoid war with the colonies is fervently expressed, but in this matter, it must be admitted, there is no hint of the independence of attitude which characterizes the *Verses to the People of England*. After all, Whitehead is the court poet, the poet of King George and his party, and the efforts of Pitt and Fox and Burke to persuade England to deal understandingly with the colonies find no echo in the laureate's odes. He contents himself with calling on the gods to avert what might have been averted by a modicum of human effort.

Ye powers, who rule o'er states and kings,
Who shield with sublunary wings
Man's erring race from woe,
To Britain's sons in every clime
Your blessings waft, whate'er their crime,
On all the winds that blow !

Beyond the vast Atlantic tide
Extend your healing influence wide,
Where millions claim your care :
Inspire each just, each filial thought,
And let the nations round be taught
The British oak is there. . . .

Where mutual interest binds the band,
Where due subjection, mild command,
Ensure perpetual ease,
Shall jarring tumults madly rave,
And hostile banners proudly wave
O'er once united seas ?

No; midst the blaze of wrath divine
Heaven's loveliest attribute shall shine,
And mercy gild the ray;
Shall still avert impending fate;
And concord its best era date
From this auspicious day.

Two years later the laureate explains his idea of democracy, and, incidentally, produces one line that is almost as bad as anything in Cibber.

. . . Enough of slaughter have ye known,
Ye wayward children of a distant clime,
For you we heave the kindred groan,
We pity your misfortune, and your crime.
Stop, parricides, the blow,
O find another foe!
And hear a parent's dear request,
Who longs to clasp you to her yielding breast.

What change would ye require? What form
Ideal floats in fancy's sky?
Ye fond enthusiasts break the charm,
And let cool reason clear the mental eye.
On Britain's well-mix'd state alone,
True Liberty has fix'd her throne,
Where law, not man, an equal rule maintains:
Can freedom e'er be found where many a tyrant reigns? . . .

The treaty of peace with America came just at the end of Whitehead's career, and the old poet, then in his seventieth year, made of his last ode a prophecy upon which our own day has written a strange and significant commentary.

Delusive is the poet's dream,
Or does prophetic truth inspire
The zeal which prompts the glowing theme,
And animates th' according lyre?

Trust the Muse: her eye commands
Distant times and distant lands:
Through bursting clouds, in opening skies,
Sees from discord union rise;
And friendship bind unwilling foes
In firmer ties than duty knows.

Torn rudely from its parent tree,
Yon scion rising in the west,
Will soon its genuine glory see,
And court again the fostering breast,
Whose nurture gave its powers to spread,
And feel their force, and lift an alien head.

The parent tree, when storms impend,
Shall own affection's warmth again;
Again his fostering aid shall lend;
Nor hear the suppliant plead in vain;
Shall stretch protecting branches round,
Extend the shelter and forget the wound.

Two Britains through th' admiring world
Shall wing their way with sails unfurl'd;
Each from the other's kindred state
Avert by turns the bolts of fate;
And acts of mutual amity endear
The Tyre and Carthage of a wider sphere. . . .

The foregoing selections will have shown that Whitehead was not a great poet. He seldom rises above mediocrity, and he is sometimes, though not often, guilty of an absurdity that makes us 'heave the kindred groan'. But on the whole his verse is smooth and not lacking in good taste, and it is characterized by sincerity, and by a freedom from fulsome flattery which is noteworthy considering the difficulties of the task that he had to keep on performing twice a year for twenty-eight years. If these seem negative virtues, we may note at least one that is positive, that he tried to live up to the ideal conception of his office, and make his odes genuinely national in their spirit. And to these qualities, which concern only the execution of his official task, must be added one of more general application. He was not only the first (and indeed the only) eighteenth-century laureate who tried to be genuinely national in spirit, but he was also uniformly decent both in his poetry and in his private life. He wrote much *vers de société*—fables for 'the fair', a 'Hymn to the Nymph of Bristol Spring', 'Venus Attiring the Graces,' songs for Ranelagh, Songs to Celia—and what not; but they are wholesome and lively pleasantries.

He had his enemies, however. As with Cibber, the satires upon his odes are more numerous even than the odes themselves. And he met them with unfailing good humour. In the *Pathetic Apology for all Laureates, Past, Present, and to Come,* he writes:

Ye silly dogs, whose half-year lays
Attend like satellites on Bays;
And still, with added lumber, load
Each birthday and each new year ode,
Why will ye *strive* to be severe? . . .
Each laureate (if kind Heav'n dispense
Some little gleam of common sense)
Blest with one hundred pounds *per ann.*

And that too taxed and but ill-paid,
With caution frames his frugal plan,
Nor apes his brethren of the trade.
He never will to garrets rise
For inspiration from the skies;
And pluck, as Hotspur would have done,
'Bright honour, from the pale-faced moon';
He never will to cellars venture,
To drag up glory from the centre;
But calmly steer his course between
Th' aerial and infernal scene;
—*One hundred pounds!* a golden mean!
Nor need he ask a printer's pains
To fix the type, and share the gains:
Each morning paper is so kind
To give his works to every wind.
Each evening post and magazine,
Gratis adopts the lay *serene*.
On their frail barks his praise or blame
Floats for an hour and sinks with them;
Sure without envy you might see
Such floundering immortality.

Like Cibber, too, he had not only the little dogs barking perennially at his heels, but the bloodhound who pursued him relentlessly. If, to change the figure, Pope may be said to have attacked Cibber with a rapier, Churchill attacked Whitehead with a bludgeon.

Dullness and *Method* still are one,
And *Whitehead* is their darling Son,
. . . who in the Laureat Chair,
By Grace, not Merit, planted there,
In awkward pomp is seen to sit,
And by his *Patent* proves his Wit;
For favors of the Great, we know,
Can Wit as well as rank bestow,
And they who, without one pretension,
Can get for Fools a place or pension,
Must able be suppos'd of course
(If reason is allow'd due force)
To give such qualities and grace,
As may equip them for the place.[1]

Whitehead wrote a *Charge to the Poets* in which he ventured to speak *ex cathedra*:

Then since my king and patron have thought fit
To place me on the throne of modern wit,

[1] *The Ghost*, bk. iii.

> My grave advice, my brethren, hear at large,
> As bishops to their clergy give their charge ;

and Churchill, irritated by ' placid ' Whitehead's sermonizing, attacked him again and again—in *The Ghost, The Prophecy of Famine,* and *Independence.*

Brilliant and bitter satirist as he was, Churchill had not Pope's faculty for conferring an unsought immortality upon his victims. If Whitehead deserves, as a part of that general exhumation which a history of the laureateship must inevitably be, to have the dust momentarily blown from his memory, we find the task rather pleasanter than with most of the eighteenth-century laureates. It may be said of him with far more truth than the Earl of Dorset said of Shadwell : ' I do not pretend to say how great a poet Whitehead may be, but I am sure he is an honest man.' The epitaph which a contemporary satirist made for him does his odes scant justice, and perhaps does the man something less, but at least it would not have offended Whitehead's kindly and unassuming spirit :

> Beneath this stone a Poet Laureate lies,
> Nor great, nor good, nor foolish, nor yet wise ;
> Not meanly humble, nor yet swelled with pride ;
> He simply lived—and just as simply died.
> Each year his Muse produced a Birth Day Ode,
> Composed with flattery in the usual mode ;
> For this, and but for this, to George's praise,
> The Bard was pensioned, and received the Bays.

THOMAS WARTON

Whitehead's tenure marked a distinct advance on Cibber's, in the respectability of the office, and with the appointment of Whitehead's successor the laureateship took another upward step. Since the days of Dryden it had generally been conferred upon men who had won more distinction in drama than in lyric poetry, and the actual choice of the candidate had been based on political as much as on literary grounds. To both of these usages the appointment of Thomas Warton seems to afford an exception. He was peculiarly identified with the profession of letters. His father, himself the author of a volume of poems, had been Professor of Poetry at Oxford from 1718 to 1728 ; and his elder brother, Joseph, had published two volumes of ' Odes ' (1744 and 1746) and, in his critical writings, had vigorously identified himself with the growing reaction against the school of Pope. Thomas

Warton had followed in the footsteps of his father as Professor of Poetry at Oxford from 1757 to 1767; had published much verse, both grave and gay; and four years before his appointment to the laureateship had completed his *History of English Poetry* (1774–81), which remains to this day a monument of research and a mine of information. His tastes were academic, and from the days when, by a pleasant anticipation, his fellow students of Trinity College had elected him poet laureate of the college and crowned him with laurel in the common-room, he had remained a university man pure and simple. Here, for the first time, was a laureate whom no nobleman, influential at court, had numbered among his favourites or dependants, and who had not sought to curry favour by panegyrics to men in high places.[1]

Why Warton should have been given a post which was ordinarily filled by political influence, it is not easy to explain; and his biographers have invariably ignored the question, as if, in the court of George III in the year of grace 1785, a sudden exhibition of disinterested concern for pure poetry were the most natural thing in the world. By all tradition Richard Cumberland ought to have been made poet laureate in 1785. He was a dramatist; he had turned his hand to other kinds of verse, and he had held several political offices. But probably he did not seek the laureateship, and if there are no records to show that Warton sought it, there was at least a channel of political influence so obviously open to him that it is hard to believe that he did not use it. The *Correspondence* of Horace Walpole contains a number of letters to Warton, all of them couched in terms of respect and admiration. In 1768, just after Gray's appointment as Professor of History and Modern Languages at Cambridge, Warton evidently wrote to Walpole asking his influence towards some preferment—probably the Professorship of Modern History at Oxford.[2] Walpole replied, regretting that he had 'no interest with the ministry', and adding, 'Your merit is entitled to that and greater distinction, and were the place in my gift, I should think you honoured it by accepting it.'[3] When, in the year 1785, the laureateship fell vacant, Walpole's

[1] During his tenure of the Professorship of Poetry at Oxford, Warton had written poems *On the Death of King George the Second* (1761), *On the Marriage of the King* (1761), and *On the Birth of the Prince of Wales* (1762); but these may fairly be taken as productions *ex officio*.

[2] According to Wooll's *Life of Joseph Warton*, Thomas was an unsuccessful candidate for that position in 1768.

[3] *Letters*, ed. Toynbee, vii. 227.

cousin, Francis Seymour Conway, Earl of Hertford, and brother of that Henry Seymour Conway who was Walpole's lifelong correspondent, was Lord Chamberlain, and had the laureateship at his disposal. That Warton again sought Walpole's influence on this occasion, or that Walpole, remembering his inability to serve Warton in the former instance, gave his influence unasked, seems more than probable, and it affords a possible explanation of Warton's appointment on the traditionally familiar grounds.

He was appointed on April 26, 1785.[1] A month later he celebrated the royal birthday in a strain markedly at variance with the odes of his predecessors. The opportunity to present the Romantic Muse at court must have been a peculiar gratification to him, but it seems to have gratified nobody else. In addition to a good deal of clumsy raillery, the ode furnished the occasion for the most effective 'hit' registered on any of the eighteenth-century laureates.

Promptly upon the publication of the ode appeared a volume entitled *Probationary Odes for the Laureateship: with a Preliminary Discourse, By Sir John Hawkins, Knt.* In his preface, 'Sir John Hawkins' (a 'blind' for Joseph Richardson, French Laurence, Richard Tickell, and others of the Rolliad group) proposes to bring together such followers of the lyric muse

'as have devoted or do devote their strains to the celebration of those best of themes, the reigning King and the current Year, or in other words, of all *Citharistae Regis, Versificatores Coronae*, Court Poets, or as we now term them, Poets Laureate.[2] . . . It must be owned that the Laureateship is already a very kingly settlement; one hundred a year, together with a tierce of Canary, or a butt of sack, are surely most princely endowments, for the honour of literature and the advancement of poetical genius. And hence (thank God and the King for it) there scarcely ever has been wanting some great and good man both willing and able to supply so important a charge.—At one time we find that great immortal genius, Mr. Thomas Shadwell (better known as Og and Mac Flecknoe) chaunting the prerogative praises of that blessed Aera.—At a nearer period, we observe the whole force of Colley Cibber's genius devoted to the labours of the same reputable employment.—And finally, in the example of a Whitehead's Muse, expatiating on the virtues of our Gracious Sovereign, have we not beheld the best of Poets, in the best of Verses, doing ample justice to the best of Kings?—The fire of Lyric Poesy, the rapid lightning of modern Pindarics, were equally required to record

[1] *Gent. Mag.*, 1785, p. 327.

[2] Warton had included a disquisition on the early 'Court Poets' in his *History of English Poetry*.

the Virtues of the Stuarts, or to immortalize the Talents of a Brunswick. . . . On no occasion has the ardour for prerogative panegyrics so conspicuously flamed forth, as on the late election for succeeding to Mr. Whitehead's honours. To account for this unparalleled struggle, let us recollect that the ridiculous reforms of the late Parliament having cut off many gentlemanly offices, it was a necessary consequence that the few which were spared became objects of rather more emulation than usual. Besides, there is a decency and regularity in producing, at fixed and certain periods of the year, the same settled quantity of metre on the same unalterable subjects, which cannot fail to give a particular attraction to the Office of the Laureateship, at a crisis like the present. . . . Is it not evident too, that in compositions of this kind, all fermentation of thought is certain in a very short time to subside and settle into mild and gentle composition—till at length the possessors of this grave and orderly office prepare their stipulated return of metre, by as proportionate and gradual exertions, as many other classes of industrious tenants provide for the due payment of their particular rents ? Surely it is not too much to say, that the business of Laureat to his Majesty is, under such provision, to the full as ingenious, reputable, and regular a trade, as that of Almanack Maker to the Stationers' Company. The contest therefore for so excellent an office, having been warmer in the late instance than at any preceding period is perfectly to be accounted for. . . . To the great Tribunal of the Public, the whole of this important contest is now submitted.'

Following this introduction is a series of testimonials to the worth of the various candidates ; an advertisement purporting to have been issued from the Lord Chamberlain's Office, on April 26, 1785, announcing the forthcoming choice of a laureate, and an official report of the proceedings when the candidates, 'assembled at the Lord Chamberlain's Office, Stable-yard, St. James's,' recited their Probationary Odes. The twenty-two odes are then printed, twenty-one of them (including one by Dr. Joseph Warton 'in humble imitation of Brother Thomas ') being in the most extravagant vein of burlesque. With the reader's mind thus prepared, the editors publish, as the last of the series, not a travesty of Thomas Warton's first official Birthday Ode, but the actual ode itself, precisely as the laureate wrote it. No satire could be more effective ; the real ode seems the most extravagant of them all.

With a poet who contrasted so markedly with his predecessors in antecedents and poetic abilities, the laureateship might have been expected at once to assume a proper dignity, but the shackles of custom were not to be lightly cast off. Poet though he was, Warton

was not the man to impart the right sort of dignity to the office. That could have been done by the exalted expression of themes of national significance. But in Warton there was less of the statesman than there was in Whitehead. Warton merely continued the panegyric tradition, and if his odes struck a new note, it was only because he followed what was for him the line of least resistance, and made them the plaything of his antiquarian and romantic ideas. The truth is that Warton fell between two stools. His more thoughtful admirers condemned his odes because the 'delicacy' of his style was lost when 'clotted with fulsome flattery',[1] and because they seemed 'to have been dictated by Minerva rather than the Muses'.[2] The court condemned them for reasons which are pungently set forth by 'Peter Pindar':

> Tom proved unequal to the Laureat's place;
> He warbled with an Attic grace:
> The language was not understood at court,
> Where bow and curtsey, grin and shrug, resort;
> Sorrow for sickness, joy for health, so civil,
> And love, that wished each other to the devil.
>
> Tom was a scholar, luckless wight!
> Lodged with old manners in a musty College,
> He knew not that a Palace hated knowledge,
> And deemed it pedantry to spell and write.
> Tom heard of Royal Libraries indeed,
> And weakly fancied that the books were read.[3]

Of these criticisms, the first deals with a point on which Warton was evidently sensitive. Apparently it was his purpose, not merely to avoid fulsome flattery, but to point out that he avoided it. In his first ode, he declares that his Muse will not 'prostitute the tribute of her lays'. In another, he cites Dryden but 'spurns his panegyric strings'. In a third he asserts:

> Nor this the verse that flattery brings,
> Nor here I strike a Siren's strings.

But in spite of the laureate's protest, the criticism was perfectly just.

[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, July 1787, p. 569.
[2] Ibid., December 1792, p. 1072.
[3] *Advice to the Future Laureat.* 'Peter Pindar' (Dr. John Wolcot) was the chief satirist of Warton's 'reign'. See especially his *Ode upon Ode, Instructions to a Celebrated Laureat*, and *Brother Peter to Brother Tom; An Expostulatory Epistle*; but these poems use the laureate as a stalking-horse for satires on George III and the court.

Not merely was the 'delicacy' of his style lost when 'clotted with fulsome flattery'. The very 'delicacy' made the flattery the more objectionable. Straightforward flattery is bad enough. Cibber's was of that sort—blunt and thick. But Warton's device was to clothe the Muse in romantic imagery, speak of nature or the glamorous past, and lead up through successive elevations of the spirit to—a compliment to George III. In 1788 King George lost his mind. In 1789 he recovered, and Warton began his birthday greeting thus:

As when the demon of the Summer storm
Walks forth the noontide landscape to deform,
Dark grows the vale, and dark the distant grove,
And thick the bolts of angry Jove
Athwart the wat'ry welkin glide,
And streams th' aerial torrent far and wide:
If by short fits the struggling ray
Should dart a momentary day,
Th' illumin'd mountain glows awhile,
By faint degrees the radiant glance
Purples th' horizon's pale expanse,
And gilds the gloom with hasty smile:
Ah! fickle smile, too swiftly past!
Again resounds the sweeping blast,
With hoarser din the demon howls;
Again the blackening concave scowls;
Sudden the shades of the meridian night
Yield to the triumph of rekindling light;
The reddening sun regains his golden sway;
And Nature stands reveal'd in all her bright array.

Such was the changeful conflict that possess'd
With trembling tumult every British breast,
When Albion, towering in the van sublime
Of Glory's march, from clime to clime
Envied, belov'd, rever'd, renown'd,
Her brows with every blissful chaplet bound,
When, in her mid career of state,
She felt her monarch's awful fate!
Till Mercy from th' Almighty throne
Look'd down on man, and waving wide
Her wreath, that, in the rainbow dyed,
With hues of soften'd lustre shone,
And bending from her sapphire cloud
O'er regal grief benignant bow'd;
To transport turn'd a people's fears,
And stay'd a people's tide of tears:

Bade this blest dawn with beams auspicious spring,
With hope serene, with healing on its wing;
And gave a Sovereign o'er a grateful land
Again with vigorous grasp to stretch the scepter'd hand.

Not less just was the criticism that Warton's odes 'seem to have been dictated by Minerva rather than the Muses'. His first ode is a piece of advice from the professorial chair:

'Tis his to bid neglected genius glow,
And teach the regal bounty how to flow.
His tutelary sceptre's sway
The vindicated arts obey,
And hail their patron king;
'Tis his to judgment's steady line
Their flights fantastic to confine,
And yet expand their wing;
The fleeting forms of fashion to restrain,
And bind capricious Taste in Truth's eternal chain.
Sculpture, licentious now no more,
From Greece her great example takes,
With Nature's warmth the marble wakes,
And spurns the toys of modern lore;
In native beauty simply plann'd,
Corinth, thy tufted shafts ascend;
The graces guide the painter's hand,
His magic mimicry to blend.

The Birthday Ode of 1786 takes his Majesty on a little journey among the classic poets who

The fragrant wreath of gratulation bore—

—Alcaeus, Pindar, Theocritus—and ends in a tribute to the king,

Who bids his Britain vie with Greece.[1]

Ancient chivalry with

The pomp of her heroic games
And crested chiefs and tissued dames,

and her wandering bards and minstrels, furnishes the theme for the New Year's Ode of 1787. The Saxon and Norman conquests supply

[1] This ode inspired Burns to write a laureate ode of another kind, *A Dream*, beginning 'Guid-mornin to your Majesty!' (pub. 1786), a frank statement of what he thought of the Royal Family and the Court;

Ye've trusted ministration
To chaps wha in a barn or byre
Wad better fill'd their station,
Than courts yon day.

the material for the Birthday Ode of 1788. In another, the laureate calls the roll of his great predecessors. It is only fair to Warton to quote this ode—the Birthday Ode of 1787—in its entirety, for it is at once thoroughly characteristic and distinctly the best of them all in phrase and spirit—though even here the effects which he gains are but means to ensure the inevitable anti-climax.[1]

The noblest Bards of Albion's choir
Have struck of old this festal lyre.
Ere Science, struggling oft in vain,
Had dar'd to break her Gothic chain,
Victorious Edward gave the vernal bough
Of Britain's bay to bloom on Chaucer's brow:
Fir'd with the gift, he chang'd to sounds sublime
His Norman minstrelsy's discordant chime;
In tones majestic hence he told
The banquet of Cambuscan bold;
And oft he sung (howe'er the rhyme
Has moulder'd to the touch of time)
His martial master's knightly board,
And Arthur's ancient rites restor'd;
The prince in sable steel that sternly frown'd,
And Gallia's captive king, and Cressy's wreath renown'd.

Won from the shepherd's simple meed,
The whispers wild of Mulla's reed,
Sage Spenser wak'd his lofty lay
To grace Eliza's golden sway:
O'er the proud theme new lustre to diffuse,
He chose the gorgeous allegoric Muse,
And call'd to life old Uther's elfin tale,
And rov'd thro' many a necromantic vale,
Pourtraying chiefs that knew to tame
The goblin's ire, the dragon's flame,
To pierce the dark enchanted hall,
Where Virtue sate in lonely thrall.
From fabling Fancy's inmost store
A rich romantic robe he bore;
A veil with visionary trappings hung,
And o'er his virgin-queen the fairy texture flung.

[1] But, Thomas Warton, without joking,
Art thou, or art thou not, thy Sovereign *smoking*?
How canst thou seriously declare
That George the Third
With Cressy's Edward can compare,
Or Harry?—'Tis too bad, upon my word.
Peter Pindar (*Instructions to a Celebrated Laureat*).

At length the matchless Dryden came,
To light the Muses' clearer flame;
To lofty numbers grace to lend,
And strength with melody to blend;
To triumph in the bold career of song,
And roll th' unwearied energy along.
Does the mean incense of promiscuous praise,
Does servile fear, disgrace his regal bays?
I spurn his panegyric strings,
His partial homage, tun'd to kings!
Be mine, to catch his manlier chord,
That paints th' impassioned Persian lord,
By glory fir'd, to pity su'd,
Rous'd to revenge, by love subdu'd;
And still, with transport new, the strains to trace,
That chant the Theban pair, and Tancred's deadly vase.

Had these blest Bards been call'd, to pay
The vows of this auspicious day,
Each had confess'd a fairer throne,
A mightier sovereign than his own!
Chaucer had made his hero-monarch yield
The martial fame of Cressy's well-fought field[1]
To peaceful prowess, and the conquests calm
That braid the sceptre with the patriot's palm:
His chaplets of fantastic bloom,
His colourings, warm from Fiction's loom,
Spenser had cast in scorn away,
And deck'd with truth alone the lay;
All real here, the Bard had seen
The glories of his pictur'd Queen!
The tuneful Dryden had not flatter'd here,
His lyre had blameless been, his tribute all sincere.

The fact that Warton's appointment had turned a good poet into a bad laureate crystallized the opinion that either the laureateship should be entirely abolished, or that it should be made a post of genuine dignity by being relieved of its semi-annual tasks. Warton himself, in *The History of English Poetry*, had described the laureateship as 'confessedly Gothic and unaccommodated to modern manners', and had expressed the wish that, while 'the department is honorably filled by a poet of taste and genius (Whitehead), the more than annual

[1] Originally this line read 'The fame of Agincourt's triumphal field'. The King's birthday was on June 4. In a letter in the July number of *The Gentleman's Magazine* the laureate was reminded that Agincourt was fought in the reign of Henry V, fifteen years after Chaucer's death.

return of a composition on a trite argument would be no longer required'. There is no evidence that Warton made any effort to carry out this wish after his own appointment, or even that he continued to entertain it, but the wish was frequently echoed in contemporary periodicals, and was given weighty expression in the concluding volume of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*:[1]

'From Augustus to Louis the muse has too often been false and venal; but I much doubt whether any age or court can produce a similar establishment of a stipendiary poet, who, in every reign, and at all events, is bound to furnish twice a year a measure of praise and verse, such as may be sung in the chapel, and, I believe, in the presence of the sovereign. I speak the more freely, as the best time for abolishing this ridiculous custom is while the prince is a man of virtue, and the poet a man of genius.'

Gibbon's words were widely quoted in contemporary periodicals and were reprinted in *The Annual Register* for 1790, when, as there was no court at either Windsor or St. James's, the New Year's Ode was not performed.[2] But the advice of the great historian was of no avail in the face of the conservatism of the court.

Warton, however, was to compose no more New Year's Odes. Early in this year his brief career as laureate came to an end.[3] With his death ended, too, any immediate prospect of the betterment of the laureateship; for Warton's successor was to display such dullness and ineptitude as might have tempted the shade of Pope to undertake another version of *The Dunciad*.

[1] Published 1788, two years after Warton's appointment. Gibbon's comment on the modern laureateship is contained in a footnote to his remarks on Petrarch, chap. lxx.

[2] According to *The Annual Register*, the omission of the New Year's Ode on this day 'occasioned much speculation'. 'Peter Pindar' seized the opportunity to write an *Ode on no Ode*, beginning—

> What! not a sprig of annual metre,
> Neither from Thomas nor from Peter?
> Who has shut up the laureat's shop?
> Alas! 'Poor Tom's a cold' I fear;
> For sack 'poor Tom' must drink small-beer,
> And lo! of that a scanty drop.
>
> St. James's happy, happy court,
> Where luxury is thought to sport,
> No more his tent shall Thomas pitch in;
> Can Odes of praise and wisdom cloy?
> Shall Caesar's bard no more enjoy
> The run of mighty Caesar's kitchen?

[3] Warton died on May 21, 1790, but his ode for the King's birthday (June 4) had already been composed, and is among his collected poems.

HENRY JAMES PYE

From the standpoint of the court, Henry James Pye [1] was a distinct improvement on his predecessors. His father had equipped him with an estate, a mortgage, and an education at Oxford, where he was a gentleman-commoner of Magdalen College. He became an officer of the Berkshire militia, and since 1784 had represented Berkshire, his native county, in the House of Commons. He failed of re-election in 1790, and the laureateship opportunely falling vacant, was promptly appointed to that office, July 28, 1790.[2]

It was an appropriate appointment. The year of Warton's death was the heyday of the Della Cruscans, the Album poets. Lady This and Lord That filled albums with their sentimental sonnets, and, under fantastic names, contributed gushing lyrics to *The World* and *The Oracle*. 'The seven Celebrated Female Poets' as Anna Seward described them in *The Gentleman's Magazine*—Letitia Barbauld, Hannah More, Miss Williams, Mrs. Piozzi, Miss Carter, Hannah Cowley, and Catherine Smith—and the 'divine Miss Seward' herself, the most besonneted of the group, were the exemplars and the arbiters of 'poetical taste'. Among the men, Robert Merry and Edward Jerningham vied with the poetical ladies. For these Gifford was preparing *The Baviad* and *The Maeviad*, determined 'to correct the growing depravity of the public taste and check the inundation of absurdity that was bursting upon us from a thousand springs'. But in 1790 the blow had not yet fallen. Nature, according to Johnson, had made Cibber for George the Second. George the Second's successor had inherited Whitehead, and had had Warton thrust upon him; but in Pye 'Farmer George' found at last an ideal celebrant. Just after Warton's death and before a successor was announced, 'Peter Pindar' had written:

> O thou, whate'er thy name, thy trade, thy art,
> Who from obscurity art doomed to start;
> Call'd by the Royal mandate to proclaim
> To distant Realms a Monarch's feeble fame. . . .

[1] Pye, by a curious coincidence, was the great-great-grandson of that Sir Robert Pye, Auditor of the Exchequer in the reign of James I, to whom Jonson addressed the

> . . . woful cry . . .
> To take apprehension
> Of a year's pension.

[2] *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1790, p. 674.

Whoe'er thou art, that winn'st the envied Prize,
Oh, if for Royal Smile thy bosom sighs,
Of Pig-economy exalt the praise;
Oh flatter Sheep and Bullocks in thy lays;
To *saving-wisdom* boldly strike the strings
And justify the *grazier-trade* in kings.
Descant on Ducks and Geese, and Cocks and Hens,
Haystacks and Dairies, Cow-houses and pens,
Descant on Dung-hills, every sort of kine,
And on the pretty article of Swine.[1]

It was good advice, albeit not to be taken too literally; and Pye was not unmindful of it. He had already practised the art of poetry as a country gentleman, and in *The Progress of Refinement* (1583), in *Shooting* (1784), and in *Amusement; a Poetical Essay* (1790) had discoursed of rural sports and joys and of the durable satisfactions of glebe and woodland, and now that he was poet laureate, he stuck to his last with a fidelity which not even the world-shaking events of that tumultuous period could altogether overcome. The brief and illusory peace which England enjoyed during the first three years of his laureateship left him free to dilate with a pleasant tinkle of vernal imagery upon the fertile fields; but even after 1793 he could always turn aside from war's alarms to a satisfying contemplation of the crop.

Nurtur'd in storms the infant year,
Comes in terrific glory forth;
Earth meets him wrapp'd in mantle drear,
And the loud tempest sings his birth.
Yet 'mid the elemental strife
Brood the rich germs of vernal life,
Frore January's iron reign,
And the dark months succeeding train,
The renovated glebe prepare
For genial May's ambrosial air,
For fruits that glowing Summer yields,
For laughing Autumn's golden fields;

[1] Of incidental interest in this connexion is the fact that during his laureateship Pye edited *The Sportsman's Dictionary*, 'containing instructions for various methods to be observed in riding, hunting, fowling, setting, fishing, racing, farriery, hawking, breeding, and feeding horses for the road and turf; the management of dogs, game and dung-hill cocks, turkeys, geese, ducks, doves, singing-birds, etc; and the manner of curing their various diseases and accidents'. There is an ironic appropriateness, by the way, in the fact that this laureate of 'saving-wisdom' should have stipulated upon his appointment that the annual tierce of wine, which from time immemorial had supplemented the pension, should be commuted for cash. It was done, and Pye got £27 in lieu of the butt of sack.

And the stout swain whose frame defies
The driving storm, the hostile skies,
While his keen plowshare turns the stubborn soil,
Knows plenty only springs the just reward of toil.

Pye would seem to have prepared a standard form at the outset, and to have varied it from year to year by only so much as circumstances absolutely required: War abroad—peace at home—reference at this point to the 'sober olive spray' and the 'laurel's warrior bough'—if the New Year's Ode, a descant on the forthcoming fruitfulness of nature—if the Birthday Ode (June), a descant on the present fruitfulness of nature—in either case a sprinkling of 'fertile glades', 'vernal showers', 'sweet strains from aromatic groves', 'ambrosial May' (to be varied occasionally with 'Maia's balmy breath'), 'abundant June'—a monarch benevolently contemplating the fruitfulness of the soil.

Ordinarily these recurrent strains are free from absolute absurdity. It is the hopeless sameness, the endless repetitions, the eternal saccharine

Birthday torrents from Parnassus
And New Year's spring-tide of divine molasses

which makes them deadly. No wonder that a contemporary wit, after listening to the 'sweet strains from aromatic groves', was moved to quote:

And when the *pie* was opened
The birds began to sing;
And wasn't that a dainty dish
To set before a king?

Of these semi-annual recurrences, the Birthday Ode of 1794 will serve as a fair sample. It will be remembered that all England was agog over the execution of Louis the Sixteenth, and that the French Republic had just declared war against Holland, England, and Spain.

Rous'd from the gloom of transient death,
Reviving Nature's charms appear;
Mild zephyr wakes with balmy breath
The beauties of the youthful year,
The fleecy storm that froze the plain,
The winds that swept the billowy main,
The chilling blast, the icy show'r,
That oft obscur'd the vernal hour,
And half deform'd th' etherial grace
That bloom'd on Maia's lovely face,
Are gone—and o'er the fertile glade,
In manhood's riper form array'd,

Bright June appears, and from his bosom throws,
Blushing with hue divine, his own ambrosial rose.

Yet there are climes where Winter hoar
Despotic still usurps the plains,
Where the loud surges lash the shore,
And dreary desolation reigns !—
While, as the shivering swain descries
The drifted mountains round him rise,
Through the dark mist and howling blast,
Full many a longing look is cast
To northern realms, whose happier skies detain
The lingering car of day, and check his golden rein.

Chide not his stay ;—the roseate spring
Not always flies on Halcyon wing ;
Not always strains of joy and love
Steal sweetly through the trembling grove—
Reflecting Sol's refulgent beams,
The falchion oft terrific gleams ;
And, louder than the wintr'y tempest's roar,
The battle's thunder shakes th' affrighted shore—
Chide not his stay—for, in the scenes,
Where nature boasts her genial pride,
Where forests spread their leafy screens,
And lucid streams the painted vales divide ;
Beneath Europa's mildest clime
In glowing Summer's verdant prime,
The frantic sons of Rapine tear
The golden wreath from Ceres' hair,
And trembling Industry, afraid
To turn the war-devoted glade,
Exposes wild to Famine's haggard eyes
Wastes where no hopes of future harvests rise,
While floating corses choke th' unpurpled flood,
And ev'ry dewy sod is stain'd with civic blood.

Vanish the horrid scene, and turn the eyes
To where Britannia's chalky cliffs arise.—
What though beneath her rougher air
A less luxuriant soil we share ;
Though often o'er her brightest day
Sails the thick storm, and shrouds the solar ray,
No purple vintage though she boast,
No olive shade her ruder coast ;
Yet here immortal Freedom reigns,
And law protects what labour gains ;
And as her manly sons behold
The cultur'd farm, the teeming fold,

See Commerce spread to ev'ry gale
From every shore, her swelling sail;
Jocund, they raise the choral lay
To celebrate th' auspicious day,
By heaven selected from the laughing year,
Sacred to patriot worth, to patriot bosoms dear.

The stirring events of that era are not altogether ignored in the official odes. Pye is careful to explain on one occasion that a certain passage calling England to arms 'is inserted at the command of His Majesty'; but the lines are as tame and uninspired as their context. Nelson's great victories at Aboukir and Trafalgar came during Pye's laureateship, but the poet who was accustomed to trot

With a grave and goodly pace
Deep-laden with his Sovereign, twice a year
Around Parnassus's old famous base,

could hardly essay the heroic note. Here is the reference to Aboukir:

Seas where deathless bards of yore,
Singing to the silver tide,
Wafted loud from shore to shore
Grecian art and Roman pride,
Say, when Carthage learn'd to vail
To mightier foes her lofty sail,
Say, when the man of Athens broke
With daring prow the Median tyrant's yoke,
Saw ye so bold, so free a band,
As Nelson led by Nilus' strand;
What time, at George's high behest,
Dread in terrific vengeance dress'd,
Fierce as the whirlwind's stormy course
They pour'd on Gallia's guilty force;
And Egypt saw Britannia's flag unfurl'd,
Wave high its victor cross, deliverer of the world?

And here is Trafalgar:

The hour of vengeance comes—by Gades' tow'rs,
By high Trafalgar's ever-trophied shore,
The godlike warrior on the adverse Pow'rs
Leads his resistless fleet with daring prore.
Terrific as th' electric bolt that flies
With fatal shock athwart the thund'ring skies,
By the mysterious will of Heaven
On man's presuming offspring driven,
Full on the scatter'd foe he hurls his fires,
Performs the dread behest, and in the flash expires—

But not his fame—While chiefs who bleed
For sacred duty's holy meed,
With glory's amaranthine wreath,
By weeping victory crown'd in death
In History's awful page shall stand
Foremost amid th' heroic band;
Nelson! so long thy hallow'd name
Thy country's gratitude shall claim;
And while a people's paeans raise
To thee the choral hymn of praise,
And while a patriot Monarch's tear
Bedews and sanctifies thy bier,
Each youth of martial hopes shall feel
True valour's animating zeal;
With emulative wish thy trophies see,
And heroes, yet unborn, shall Britain owe to thee.

Pye's Della Cruscan soul was not attuned to naval victories; but when he celebrated a royal wedding he was in his element. Two such events marked his laureateship. He chants the marriage of the Prince of Wales to Princess Caroline of Brunswick, not forgetting the while to remind a listening world that away back in 1762 he, Henry James Pye, had written an 'Ode on the Birth of the Prince of Wales':

O royal youth! a king's, a parent's pride,
A nation's future hope!—again the tongue
That joined the choir, what time by Isis side
Her tuneful sons thy birth auspicious sung,
Now hails, fulfill'd by Hymen's hallowed flame:
The warmest wish Affection's voice could frame:
For say, can Fame, can Fortune know
Such genuine raptures to bestow,
As from the smiles of wedded love arise,
When heavenly virtue beams from blushing Beauty's eyes?

Likewise the marriage of Prince Frederick William of Stuttgart to Princess Charlotte Matilda of England:

Awhile the frowning Lord of arms
Shall yield to gentler pow'rs the plain;
Lo! Britain greets the milder charms
Of Cytherea's reign.
Mute is the trumpet's brazen throat,
And the sweet flute's melodious note,
Floats on the soft ambrosial gale;
The sportive Loves and Graces round,
Beating with jocund step the ground,
Th' auspicious nuptials hail!

> The Muses cease to weave the wreath of war,
> But hang their roseate flow'rs on Hymen's golden car!

Meanwhile, as year by year the choristers gathered at St. James's to chant the smooth numbers of the Birthday Ode,[1] the king whose virtues the laureate was officially authorized to celebrate was dwindling into a mere *nominis umbra*. Long before, in one of George's earlier attacks, Peter Pindar had described the laureate's task as that of 'proving his great King *alive*'; and on several occasions, notably in 1804, Pye records, as Warton had done before him, the 'restoration' of the monarch. Finally, in 1810, the complete mental collapse of George the Third put an end to both New Year and Birthday Odes during the brief remainder of Pye's tenure.[2] The fact that the king lingered on until 1820, in a retirement which was generally acknowledged to be final, created, both for Pye and for Pye's successor, a situation in which there were virtually no royal birthdays to celebrate. This break in the tradition facilitated Southey's effort to prevent the renewal of the Birthday Ode when George the Fourth came to the throne; but meanwhile the creation of the Regency renewed ordinary court functions, and when on the death of Pye in 1813 Southey was appointed to the laureateship he found himself compelled, much against his will, to continue the annual New Year's Ode. And even the custom of the Birthday Ode threatened for a moment to renew itself upon the accession of George the Fourth.

[1] At some time during Pye's tenure (it is impossible to tell just when) the formal production of the New Year's ode at St. James's was temporarily given up. In a pamphlet by Peter Pindar entitled 'More Money or Odes to Mr. Pitt', occur the lines:

> Th' expense of New Year's Ode is felt no more;
> Thus is that needless, tuneless hubbub o'er:
> All praise must centre in the Birthday Song.
> The Virtues must be lump'd together, yes;
> And then (if Subjects may presume to guess)
> The Laureat need not make it very long.

There is no record of a *performance* of the New Year's ode until 1800, when Pye's *Carmen Seculare* for the opening of the century is recorded as 'Performed January 18th, at St. James's' (*Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. lxx, p. 69); but with the exception of the year 1792, when the New Year's ode is omitted, the *Annual Register* prints both New Year's Ode and Birthday Ode for every year from 1790 to 1813.

[2] Pye died in 1813. *The Gentleman's Magazine* of September of that year gives a list of his writings, which by that time had been increased by a number of tragedies and comedies and by an epic poem on King Alfred, and notes the proposed publication of 'an elegant and uniform' edition of his works.

VIII

THE LAUREATESHIP IN MODERN TIMES

> The laurel, meed of mighty conquerors
> And poets sage.
>
> SPENSER, *Faerie Queene*.

ROBERT SOUTHEY

SOUTHEY's laureateship marks the transition from the old order to the new. The very circumstances of his appointment reflect the new vigour of literature at this period, and the growing official sense of its importance.

According to the usual story, his name was not at first thought of for the laureateship, and it was only after the position had been offered to Scott and refused by him, that, at Scott's own instigation, the offer was made to Southey. This is Lockhart's version,[1] and colour is lent to it by Southey's own statement in the preface (dated 1837) to the third volume of his *Poetical Works*: 'I was on the way to London when the correspondence upon this subject between Sir Walter Scott and Mr. Croker took place: a letter from Scott followed me thither; and, on my arrival in town, I was informed of what had been done. No wish for the laureateship had passed across my mind, nor had I ever dreamt that it would be proposed to me.' But by 1837 Southey had evidently forgotten the details of the affair as he conveyed them to Wynn, in a letter of September 20, 1813[2]:

'Pye's death was announced a day or two before my departure from Keswick, and at the time I thought it so probable that the not-very-desirable succession might be offered to me, as to bestow a little serious thought upon the subject, as well as a jest or two. On my arrival in town, Bedford came to my brother's to meet me at breakfast; told me that Croker had spoken with him about it, and he with Gifford; that they supposed the *onus* of the office would be dropped, or if it were not, that I might execute it so as to give it a new character; and that as *detur digniori* was the maxim upon which the thing was likely to be bestowed, they thought it would become me to accept it. My business, however, whatever might be

[1] *Life of Scott*, iv. 101–20.

[2] *Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, ed. Rev. C. C. Southey, London, 1850, iv. 41–2.

my determination, was to call without delay at the Admiralty, thank C. for what was actually intended well, and learn how the matter stood.

'Accordingly, I called on Croker. He had spoken to the Prince; and the Prince observing that I had written "some good things in favour of the Spaniards," said the office should be given to me. . . . Presently Croker meets Lord Liverpool, and tells him what had passed; Lord Liverpool expressed his sorrow that he had not known it a day sooner, for he and the Marquis of Hertford had consulted together upon whom the vacant honour could most properly be bestowed. Scott was the greatest poet of the day, and to Scott therefore they had written to offer it. The Prince was displeased at this; though he said he ought to have been consulted, it was his pleasure that I should have it, and have it I should. Upon this Croker represented that he was Scott's friend as well as mine, that Scott and I were on friendly terms; and for the sake of all three he requested that the business might rest where it was.'

This was the state of the case when Scott received a letter from Dr. Clarke, librarian to the Prince Regent, saying that he had appealed to the Prince to appoint Scott laureate, and that the Prince had replied that Scott 'had already been written to'. At the same time, Scott received a letter from the Marquis of Hertford (then Lord Chamberlain) formally tendering him the office. Scott was under the impression that the laureateship carried with it a salary of £300 or £400, and was strongly tempted to accept; but before doing so, he wrote asking the advice of his patron and friend, the Duke of Buccleuch. The Duke replied:

'As to the offer of His Royal Highness to appoint you laureate, I shall frankly say that I should be mortified to see you hold a situation, which by the general concurrence of the world, is stamped ridiculous. There is no good reason why this should be so; but so it is. *Walter Scott, Poet Laureate*, ceases to be the Walter Scott of the *Lay, Marmion*, etc. Any future poem of yours would not come forward with the same probability of a successful reception. The poet laureate would stick to you and your productions like a piece of *court-plaster*. . . . I would write frankly and openly to His Royal Highness, but with respectful gratitude, for he *has* paid you a compliment. I would not fear to state that you had hitherto written when in poetic mood, but feared to trammel yourself with a fixed periodical exertion; and I cannot but conceive that His Royal Highness, who has much taste, will at once see the many objections which you must have to his proposal, but which you cannot write. Only think of being chaunted and recitatived by a parcel of hoarse and squeaking choristers on a birthday, for the edification of the bishops, pages,

maids of honour, and gentlemen-pensioners! Oh, horrible, thrice horrible!'

Thereupon, Scott wrote to the Lord Chamberlain, declaring that he felt himself 'inadequate to the fitting discharge of the regularly recurring duty of periodical composition', and declining the office. At the same time, he wrote to Southey, acknowledging that he himself had been tendered 'the laurel vacant by the death of the poetical Pye', but had declined it as being already in a measure provided for, and 'unwilling to incur the censure of engrossing the emolument attached to one of the few appointments which seems proper to be filled by a man of literature who has no other views in life. Will you forgive me, my dear friend, if I own I had you in my recollection?' Scott adds that he has already given a hint to Croker 'to throw the office into your option'. The office thus (as Scott thought) handed on to Southey, and also (as Scott was not aware) virtually handed back to him, was accepted without hesitation, and Southey was sworn on November 4, 1813.

He describes the ceremony of his induction in a letter to Scott:

'At length, after sundry ineffectual attempts, owing sometimes to his absence, and once or twice to public business, I saw Croker once more, and he discovered for me that the delay originated in a desire of Lord Hertford's that Lord Liverpool should write to him, and ask the office for me. This calling in the Prime Minister about the disposal of an office, the net emoluments of which are about £90 a year, reminded me of the old proverb about shearing pigs. Lord Liverpool, however, was informed of this by Croker; the letter was written, and in the course of another week Lord Hertford wrote to Croker that he would give orders for making out the appointment. A letter soon followed to say that the order was given, and that I might be sworn in whenever I pleased. My pleasure, however, was the last thing to be consulted. After due inquiry on my part, and some additional delays, I received a note to say that if I would attend at the Chamberlain's office at one o'clock on Thursday, November 4, a gentleman-usher would be there to administer the oath. Now it so happened that I was engaged to go to Woburn on the Tuesday, meaning to return on Thursday to dinner, or remain a day longer, as I might feel disposed. Down I went to the office, and solicited a change in the day; but this was in vain, the gentleman-usher had been spoken to, and a Poet-Laureate is a creature of a lower disposition. I obtained, however, two hours' grace; and yesterday, by rising by candlelight and hurrying the postboys, reached the office to the minute. I swore to be a faithful servant to the King, to reveal all treason which might come to my knowledge, to discharge the

duties of my office, and to obey the Lord Chamberlain in all matters of the King's service, and in his stead the Vice-Chamberlain. Having taken this upon my soul, I was thereby inducted into all the rights, privileges, and benefits which Henry James Pye, Esq., did enjoy, or ought to have enjoyed.'

To Croker Southey had written: 'I would not write odes as boys write exercises, at stated times and upon stated subjects; but if it were understood that upon great public events I might either write or be silent as the spirit moved, I should now accept the office as an honourable distinction, which under those circumstances it would become', and no moment for the initiation of his activities could have been more to his taste than New Year's day of 1814. Since 1803, when the momentary illusion of peace was dispelled by the treaty of Amiens, the terrible shadow of Napoleon had darkened English skies. England had not been invaded, but Austerlitz, Jena, Auerstädt, the collapse of England's old ally, Prussia, at the treaty of Tilsit, the new Confederation against England, the violent annexation of Spain, the treaty of Schönbrunn, the realization that Napoleon's schemes for the ultimate humiliation of England underlay these events—all these things had created a black pessimism, a conviction that it was useless to fight against the stars in their courses. 'Can any man of sense', said *The Edinburgh Review*, 'does any plain, unaffected man, above the level of a drivelling courtier or a feeble fanatic, dare to say that he can look at this impending contest without trembling, every inch of him, for the result?' And then the tide had turned. Spain had risen against the oppressor. The Russian winter had dealt its blow. Humiliated Prussia had sprung to life once more. And at Leipsic, only two months before this first New Year's day of the laureate's tenure, Napoleon had at last met decisive defeat.

During all this while Southey had been taking an active part in political controversy. To *The Quarterly*, founded in 1809 to counteract the Whig opinions of *The Edinburgh*, he had been from the first a regular contributor. For three years, 1808–10, he had written the historical part of *The Edinburgh Annual Register*, and he had been prolific of letters to the press. To him the overthrow—as he thought the final downfall—of Napoleon at Leipsic came as the fulfilment of his own undaunted prophecies, and in his triumphant tribute to an England which had stood steadfast he did not fail to include more than one scathing word for the 'weak hearts' and 'abject minds' of those who had tried in vain to 'possess her counsels'.

CARMEN TRIUMPHALE,

For the Commencement of the Year 1814.

'Illi justitiam confirmavere triumphi,
Præsentes docuere Deos.'
Claudian.

I

In happy hour doth he receive
The Laurel, meed of famous Bards of yore,
Which Dryden and diviner Spenser wore, . .
In happy hour, and well may he rejoice,
Whose earliest task must be
To raise the exultant hymn for victory,
And join a nation's joy with harp and voice,
Pouring the strain of triumph on the wind,
Glory to God, his song, Deliverance for Mankind!

II

Wake, lute and harp! My soul take up the strain!
Glory to God! Deliverance for Mankind!
Joy, . . for all Nations, joy! But most for thee,
Who hast so nobly fill'd thy part assign'd,
O England! O my glorious native land!
For thou in evil days didst stand
Against leagued Europe all in arms array'd,
Single and undismay'd,
Thy hope in Heaven and in thine own right hand.
Now are thy virtuous efforts overpaid,
Thy generous counsels now their guerdon find, . .
Glory to God! Deliverance for Mankind! . . .

XVI

Open thy gates, O Hanover! display
Thy loyal banners to the day;
Receive thy old illustrious line once more!
Beneath an Upstart's yoke opprest,
Long hath it been thy fortune to deplore
That line, whose fostering and paternal sway
So many an age thy grateful children blest.
The yoke is broken now: . . A mightier hand
Hath dash'd, . . in pieces dash'd, . . the iron rod.
To meet her Princes, the deliver'd land
Pours her rejoicing multitudes abroad;
The happy bells, from every town and tower,
Roll their glad peals upon the joyful wind;
And from all hearts and tongues, with one consent,
The high thanksgiving strain to heaven is sent, . .
Glory to God! Deliverance for Mankind!

XVII

Egmont and Horn, heard ye that holy cry,
Martyrs of Freedom, from your seats in Heaven?
And William the Deliverer, doth thine eye
Regard from yon empyreal realm the land
For which thy blood was given?
What ills hath that poor Country suffer'd long!
Deceived, despised, and plunder'd, and oppress'd,
Mockery and insult aggravating wrong!
Severely she her errors hath atoned,
And long in anguish groan'd,
Wearing the patient semblance of despair,
While fervent curses rose with every prayer,
In mercy Heaven at length its ear inclined;
The avenging armies of the North draw nigh,
Joy for the injured Hollander! . . the cry
Of Orange rends the sky!
All hearts are now in one good cause combined, . .
Once more that flag triumphant floats on high, . .
Glory to God! Deliverance for Mankind!

XVIII

When shall the Dove go forth? Oh when
Shall Peace return among the Sons of Men?
Hasten benignant Heaven the blessed day!
Justice must go before,
And Retribution must make plain the way;
Force must be crushed by Force,
The power of Evil by the power of Good,
Ere Order bless the suffering world once more,
Or Peace return again.
Hold then right on in your auspicious course,
Ye Princes, and ye People, hold right on!
Your task not yet is done:
Pursue the blow, . . ye know your foe, . .
Complete the happy work so well begun.
Hold on, and be your aim with all your strength
Loudly proclaim'd and steadily pursued;
So shall this fatal Tyranny at length
Before the arms of Freedom fall subdued.
Then, when the waters of the flood abate
The Dove her resting-place secure may find:
And France restored, and shaking off her chain,
Shall join the Avengers in the joyful strain,
Glory to God! Deliverance for Mankind!

This is the form in which the *Carmen Triumphale* was given to the public; and the ringing words provided an auspicious beginning for Southey's laureateship. But even in the composition of this first of

his official productions, Southey found that there were thorns in the laurel wreath. In his first draft of the poem he had included five stanzas bitterly denouncing Napoleon as 'the perfidious Corsican'—

> Remorseless, godless, full of fraud and lies,
> And black with murders and with perjuries.

John Rickman, to whom he submitted the manuscript, advised him to omit them: 'I am not sure that you do not forget that *office* imposes upon a man many restraints besides the one day's bag and sword at Carlton House. Put the case that, through the mediation of Austria, we make peace with Bonaparte, and he becomes, of course, *a friendly power*;—can you stay in office, this *Carmen* remaining on record?' Southey grudgingly eliminated the offending stanzas, and the poem was then sent on, in due form, to Croker. But even this would not do. Croker promptly demanded the elimination of *all condemnatory references* to Napoleon—and again Southey indignantly submitted. 'I spoilt my poem', he writes in a letter to the Rev. Herbert Hill, 'in deference to Rickman's judgement and Croker's advice, cutting out all that related to Bonaparte, and which gave strength, purport, and coherence to the whole. Perhaps I may discharge my conscience by putting these rejected parts together and letting them off in *The Courier* before it becomes a libellous offence to call murder and tyranny by their proper names.'

The rejected stanzas were duly published in *The Courier* anonymously, with the addition of four new stanzas equally damnatory. The poem now appears in his collected poems as an 'Ode written during the Negotiations with Bonaparte in January 1814'.

Not even Rickman's prudence and Croker's censoriousness, however, could make the *Carmen* altogether innocuous. In its final form it contained, in addition to the 'abject minds', a number of other veiled allusions. When it was given to the press, these allusions were unveiled by means of footnote quotations from *The Edinburgh Review*, with ironical comments. These not only drew the fire of the Whigs, but also displeased the judicious in Southey's own political camp, and put him on the defensive with some of his best friends. He wrote to Wynn, who had warned him that such references would provoke his foes to attack him on the score of his former republicanism:

'As for the retaliation of which you are apprehensive, do not suppose, my dear Wynn, that one who has never feared to speak his opinions sincerely, can have any fear of being confronted with his former self. I was a republican; I should be so still if I thought we were advanced enough in civilization for such a form of society;

and the more my feelings, my judgment, my old prejudices might incline me that way, the deeper would necessarily be my hatred of Bonaparte. . . . If I were conscious of having been at any time swayed in the profession of my opinions by private or interested motives, then indeed might I fear what malice could do against me. True it is that I am a pensioner and Poet Laureat. I owe the pension to you, the laurel to the Spaniards. Whether the former has prevented me from speaking as I felt upon the measures of Government, where I thought myself called upon to speak at all, let my volumes of the Register bear witness.

Of the taste of making a patriotic ode the vehicle for partisan allusions and spiteful thrusts, there cannot be two opinions. Southey was clearly wrong. But this need not blind us to the more important point that here at last was a laureate who *had* opinions of his own, who found the official fetters irksome, and who was going to allow himself to be shackled by them as little as might be.

The fetters were harder to throw off than Southey had expected. He had written to Croker: 'I would not write odes as boys write exercises at stated times:' and he had understood Croker to promise that he should be relieved of the annual duty. But Croker did not fulfil his promise, and on the approach of the second New Year's day, Southey found himself compelled to continue the ancient usage. 'I was in good hope that this silly custom had been dispensed with, but on making inquiry through Croker, the reply was that an ode I must write.' 'When', he complains in another letter of this same period, 'did this fool's custom begin? Before Cibber's time? I would have made the office honourable if they would have let me. If they will not, the dishonour will not be mine.' Unwelcome as the task was, he certainly performed it for a number of years, for in a letter of 1820 he refers to 'the annual odes, which have regularly been supplied, though I have hitherto succeeded in withholding them from publication'. His son, the Rev. Cuthbert Southey, editor of the *Life and Correspondence*, commenting on the letters of 1820–24, says:

'But in addition to all his other manifold employments, the Laureateship was an inconvenient tax upon his time, and a considerable one upon his ingenuity. The regular task-work was still required, and he was at the same time too desirous of rendering the Laurel more honourable than it had been, to be content with merely those common-place compositions; which no one could hold more cheaply than he did himself, often designating them as "simply good for nothing", and declaring "that next to getting rid of the task which the Laureateship imposed upon him, of writing stated verses at stated times, the best thing he could do was to avoid publishing them except on his own choice and his own time".'

Southey seems to have adhered to his intention to keep them out of print, for neither *The Gentleman's Magazine*, which had printed the official odes regularly since 1731, nor *The Annual Register*, which had printed them since 1759, carries the series further than the *Carmen Triumphale* of 1814. Nor, apparently, were they merely kept out of print. According to Southey's own statement in the preface to the Odes written on notable occasions and included in the Collected Poetical Works of 1837, the conventional New Year's odes were not even performed at court. He gives the impression that he merely prepared them in case they might be called for.[1] But as the second New Year's day of his laureateship approaches, we find him writing to Bedford: 'I have been rhyming as doggedly and as dully as if my name had been Henry James Pye. Another dogged fit will, it is hoped, carry me through this job, and as the Ode will be very much according to rule, and entirely good-for-nothing, I presume it may be found unobjectionable. Meantime, the poor Mus. Doc. has the old poem to mumble over. As I have written in regular stanzas, I shall dispatch him one by this post to set him his tune.' This must refer to an intended performance at St. James's or at Carlton House. There are many references in the Correspondence to the difficulties which Parsons and Shield, successively 'Musicians in Ordinary to His Majesty', had with the wayward metres of Southey's various odes.[2] Was the performance

[1] 'My appointment had no sooner been made known than I received a note with Sir William Parsons' compliments, requesting that I would let him have the ode as soon as possible, Mr. Pye having always provided him with it six weeks before the New Year's Day. I was not wanting in punctuality: nevertheless, it was a great trouble to Sir William, that the office should have been conferred upon a poet who did not walk in the ways of his predecessor, and do according to all things that he had done; for Mr. Pye had written his odes always in regular stanzas and in rhyme. Poor Sir William, though he had not fallen upon evil tongues and evil times, thought he had fallen upon evil ears when he was to set verses like mine to music. But the labour which the chief musician bestowed upon the verses of the chief poet was so much labour lost. The performance of the annual odes had been suspended from the time of the king's illness, in 1810. Under the circumstances of his malady, any festal celebration of the birthday would have been a violation of natural feeling and public propriety. On those occasions, it was certain that nothing would be expected from me during the life of George III. But the New Year's performance might perhaps be called for; and for that, therefore, I always prepared.'

[2] For example, he writes to Bedford, à propos of the 'Funeral Song' for the Princess Charlotte of Wales: 'Shield's note is a curiosity in its kind. But he is very civil, and I would willingly task myself rather than decline doing what he wishes me to do. If, however, by a general chorus, he means one which is to recur at the end of every stanza, an ode must be framed with reference to such a burthen, or else it would be a burthen

of the New Year's Ode abandoned shortly after Southey became laureate, so that he forgot by 1837 that any had been performed? And if the performance was discontinued, and if the words were no longer given to the press, why was Southey compelled to go on writing them, and what became of them? Were they submitted in manuscript to the Prince Regent for his private delectation, or sent to that tragic place of retirement where the old king wandered, blind, deaf, and demented? The odes were always a public tribute.

At any rate, and for whatever purpose, the annual odes were required of the laureate throughout the Regency, and when the old king died and George the Fourth came at last to the throne, it seemed that the Birthday Odes also were to be exacted. George the Third died in January 1820, and in March Southey wrote to Bedford: 'Alas! the birthdays will now be kept. Learn for me on what days, that I may be ready in time.' The coronation, however, was postponed to the following year, and for a while the laureate was left undisturbed, but on March 4, 1821, he writes:

'Yesterday's post brought me also an intimation from my musical colleague, Mr. Shield, that "our most gracious and royal master intends to command the performance of an Ode at St. James' on the day fixed for the celebration of his birthday". Of course, therefore, my immediate business is to get into harness and work in the mill. Two or three precious days will be spent in producing what will be good for nothing; for as for making anything good of a birthday ode, I might as well attempt to manufacture silk purses from sows' ears. Like Warton, I shall give the poem an historical character; but I shall not do this as well as Warton, who has done it very well.'

But nearly five months were still to elapse before the coronation (July 1821), and meantime wiser counsels prevailed. The 'Ode for St. George's Day', which the laureate had prepared for the resumption of the Birthday celebration, was not called for, and the aged custom of the Birthday Ode, which had been in a state of coma since

indeed; and indeed it would be impossible to fit one to stanzas of such different import as these. If, on the other hand, a concluding stanza is meant, more adapted for a "flourish of trumpets, etc.", I am afraid I cannot find one, but I will try.' Again: 'It is really my wish to use all imaginable civility to the Mus. Doc., and yet I dare say he thinks me a troublesome fellow as well as an odd one.' And again: 'If I give the composer more trouble than poor Pye did, I am sorry for it, but I can no more write like Mr. Pye than Mr. Pye could write like me. His pyecrust and mine were not made of the same materials.' Many other instances could be cited from the Correspondence. The two principal difficulties with the odes, from the musical director's standpoint, seemed to be the irregularity of line-length and the absence of rhyme.

1810, gave up the ghost at last. With it, too, collapsed the New Year's Ode and the laureate's annual task-work was over.

Meanwhile, however, and indeed since the very beginning of his laureateship, Southey had been extraordinarily active in the more dignified function of his office, the production of odes on notable public events. The appointment spurred his facile pen to even greater productiveness. 'In the course of this year', he wrote to Scott in 1814, 'I shall volunteer verses enough of this kind [*Carmen Triumphale*] to entitle me to a fair dispensation for all task work in future. . . . I am finishing *Roderick*, and deliberating what subject to take up next; for as it has pleased you and the Prince to make me Laureate, I am bound to keep up my poetical character.' And again in a letter to Neville White of the same year:

'The Laureateship will certainly have this effect upon me, that it will make me produce more poetry than I otherwise should have done. For many years I had written little, and was permitting other studies to wean me from it more and more. But it would be unbecoming to accept the only public mark of honour which is attached to the pursuit, and at the same time withdraw from the profession. I am therefore reviving half-forgotten plans, forming new ones, and studying my old masters with almost as much ardour and assiduity as if I were young again.'

Byron, it will be remembered, had adjured him five years before:

> O Southey! Southey! cease thy varied song!
> A bard may chaunt too often and too long;

but the enthusiastic bard, who might seem for a little while to have taken the satirist's warning to heart, now unloosed the flood-gates of his poetic fancy.

In addition to a series of 'Inscriptions' which were inspired by his office,[1] and which ultimately grew to the proportions of a volume, and in addition to references to matters of state in poems of an unofficial nature, Southey's Collected Poems include the *Carmen Triumphale*; the 'Ode written during the Negotiations with Bonaparte, 1814'; 'Ode written during the War with America, 1814'; *Carmen Aulica*, written in 1814, on the Arrival of the Allied Sovereigns in England (a tripartite production, including odes to the Prince Regent, Emperor

[1] 'You will see that I have announced a series of inscriptions recording the achievements of our army in the Peninsula. Though this is not exactly *ex officio*, yet I should not have thought of it if it had not seemed a fit official undertaking' (Letter to Herbert Hill, December 28, 1813).

Alexander of Russia and King Frederick William of Prussia); *The Poet's Pilgrimage to Waterloo*; *Carmen Nuptiale*, or 'The Lay of the Laureate', celebrating the marriage of Princess Charlotte to Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg; the funeral ode for the death of the Princess Charlotte; and Odes 'On the Battle of Algiers', 'On the Death of Queen Charlotte', 'For St. George's Day', and two odes written, respectively, 'After the King's Visit to Ireland', and 'After the King's Visit to Scotland'. When to these commemorative poems are added *The Vision of Judgment*, and the two long odes grouped under the title *The Warning Voice*, admonishing his countrymen against Catholic Emancipation, and when it is considered that all these run to unusual length, we can get the full significance of Southey's statement made in 1820: 'Without reckoning the annual odes, I have written more upon public occasions (on none of which I should otherwise have composed a line) than has been written by any person who ever held the office before, with the single exception of Ben Jonson, if his Masques are taken into account.'

The first impression which one gets from a survey of this mass of material is of the seriousness with which the poet took both himself and his office.

> Sometimes I soar where Fancy guides the rein,
> Beyond this visible diurnal sphere;
> But most, with long and self-approving pain,
> Patient pursue the historian's task severe;
> Thus in the ages which are past I live,
> And those which are to come my sure reward will give.
>
> Yea, in this now, while Malice frets her hour,
> Is foretaste given me of that meed divine;
> Here, undisturbed in this sequestered bower,
> The friendship of the good and wise is mine;
> And that green wreath which decks the Bard when dead,
> That laureate garland, crowns my living head;—
>
> That wreath which, in Eliza's golden days,
> My master dear, divinest Spenser, wore,
> That which rewarded Drayton's learned lays,
> Which thoughtful Ben and gentle Daniel bore,—
> Grin, Envy, through thy ragged mask of scorn!
> In honour it was given, with honour it is worn!
>
> Proudly I raised the high thanksgiving strain
> Of victory in a rightful cause achieved;

For which I long had looked, and not in vain.
As one who, with firm faith, and undeceived,
In history and the heart of man could find
Sure presage of deliverance for mankind.

Proudly I offered to the royal ear
My song of joy when War's dread work was done,
And glorious Britain round her satiate spear
The olive garland twined, by Victory won;
Exulting as became me in such cause,
I offered to the Prince his People's just applause.

And when, as if the tales of old Romance
Were but to typify his splendid reign,
Princes and Potentates from conquered France,
And chiefs in arms approved, a peerless train,
Assembled at his Court,—my duteous lays
Preferred a welcome of enduring praise.

And when that last and most momentous hour
Beheld the re-risen cause of evil yield
To the Red Cross and England's arm of power,
I sung of Waterloo's unequalled field,
Paying the tribute of a soul embued
With deepest joy devout and aweful gratitude.[1]

Detur Digniori! It was desirable for the poet to take his office seriously. It needed rehabilitation. But what was needed above all was a poet who would talk about the office as little as possible, and gradually enhance the dignity of the title by the worth of his work. Southey began nonchalantly enough. His early letters treat the appointment with a genial lightness, pleasant to read. But his own conviction that he was one of the great ones of earth [2] was accompanied neither by the saving precaution of reticence nor by the saving grace of humour,

[1] *The Lay of the Laureate*, proem.

[2] To Scott: 'Another generation is coming on. You and I, however, are not yet off the stage; and whenever we quit it, it will not be to men who will make a better figure there.'

To Bedford, à propos of the suggestion of the editor of the *New Monthly Magazine*, to publish a portrait and biographical sketch of the laureate: '*Quoad* the biographical sketch, nothing more need be mentioned than that I was born at Bristol, August 12, 1774,—prince and poet having the same birthday,' &c.

To Bedford, who had criticized him for talking too much about himself in the Proem to the *Lay of the Laureate*: 'If egotism in poetry be a sin, God forgive all great poets! . . . He who would leave any durable monument behind him must live in the past and look to the future. The poets of old scrupled not to say this: and who is there who is not delighted

and in his poems he talked incessantly about himself. So, for that matter, did Wordsworth, and we are reminded by Jeffrey that to their own generation the one Lake Poet seemed as conceited as the other. Yet the perspective of time has imparted to Wordsworth's egoisms a kind of simple grandeur, and has made of Southey's pretensions only sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. When we find Southey preluding his description of the battlefield of Waterloo with such words as these :

> But when I reach at themes of loftier thought,
> And tell of things surpassing earthly sense,
> (Which, by yourselves, O Muses, I am taught)
> Then aid me with your fuller influence,
> And to the height of that great argument,
> Support my spirit in her great ascent !
>
> So may I boldly round my temples bind
> The laurel which my master Spenser wore ;
> And free in spirit as the mountain wind
> That makes my symphony in this lone hour,
> No perishable song of triumph raise,
> But sing in worthy strains my Country's praise. . . .
>
> Me most of all men it behoved to raise
> The strain of triumph for this foe subdued,
> To give a voice to joy, and in my lays
> Exalt a nation's hymn of gratitude,
> And blazon forth in song that day's renown,—
> For I was graced with England's laurel crown ;

and when we remember that the description which follows this prelude was written in the same year as Byron's ' There was a sound of revelry by night ', we wonder that the obviousness of the contrast did not give Southey pause.

The warning that his political opponents would have their revenge was soon justified. They brought out his *Wat Tyler*, which had lain *perdu* for twenty-three years. It was one of the firstfruits of Southey's Radical youth, when he had been interested in ' pantisocracy ' and kindred schemes ; but the publisher with whom he had left the manuscript had never published it. The piratical publication of it at this late day was a blow to the Tory Laureate, and his application

with these passages, whenever time has set his seal upon the prophecy which they contain ? '

Jeffrey to Hogg : ' I have as well as you a great respect for Southey ; but he is a most provoking fellow, and at least as conceited as his neighbour Wordsworth.'

to the courts for an injunction against the publisher was refused. The matter was even taken up in Parliament, but it soon blew over. Attacks on his political opinions he could meet fairly and with a practised pen, for he was an able controversialist. But it was his own defects that exposed him to ridicule and brought him under the lash of a supreme satirist.

In the very letter to Neville White in which Southey makes the perilous boast of having written more than any laureate since Jonson, he remarks: 'I shall have a poem to send you in the course of a few weeks, planned upon occasion of the king's death (which you may think no very promising subject). . . . The title is "A Vision of Judgment". It is likely to attract some notice because I have made—and, in my own opinion with some success—the bold experiment of constructing a metre upon the principle of the ancient hexameter.' In the *Vision*, the poet sees George III at the judgement-seat of Heaven, and witnesses summoned to bear testimony for and against him. Charles James Fox and 'Junius' appear as 'Accusers', but are tongue-tied with shame in the august presence of the King. George Washington bears witness as an 'Absolver'. Thereupon the king is approved, drinks of the water of life, and joins the shades of kings and great men of the past. The poet, as the company are passing through the everlasting gates, also

> . . . press'd forward to enter,
> But the weight of the body withheld me. I stoopt to the fountain,
> Eager to drink thereof, and to put away all that was earthly.
> Darkness came over me then, at the chilling touch of the water,
> And my feet methought sunk, and I fell precipitate.

'What a grand bespattering of abuse I shall have when the Vision appears', wrote Southey a few weeks later. He thought the abuse would be solely on political grounds,—'for what is said (in the poem) of the factious spirit by which the country has been disturbed during the last fifty years'. To that sort of abuse he professed himself indifferent, and when George IV was pleased to express his approval of the way in which the laureate had disposed of the august shade,[1] the cup of Southey's satisfaction ran over.

And then Byron got hold of the *Vision*. In *English Bards and*

[1] 'The king sent me word that he had read The Vision of Judgment twice and was well pleased with it; and he afterward told my brother (Dr. S.) at the drawingroom, that I had sent him a very beautiful poem, which he had read with great pleasure.'

Scotch Reviewers Southey, not then laureate, had found himself in such a plenitude of good company that he could afford to ignore Byron's youthful ridicule. Now, however, he had not only directly offended Byron in the preface to the *Vision* by challenging the 'Satanic School',[1] but, by the ponderous absurdity of the poem, by his inevitable introduction of himself, and, in general, by that same complacent egoism which had been characteristic of him through his laureateship and now reached its climax, he exposed himself to Byron's matchless powers of satire. To-day, when the very names of Southey's epics are forgotten,[2] the unfortunate laureate lives in Byron's burlesque of his own *Vision*.

As Byron has it, the argument between Michael and Satan for the soul of George III is interrupted by the appearance of George's laureate, and they pause to hear him:

> But ere the spavin'd dactyls could be spurr'd
> Into recitative, in great dismay
> Both cherubim and seraphim were heard
> To murmur loudly through their long array;
> And Michael rose ere he could get a word
> Of all his founder'd verses under way,
> And cried, 'For God's sake stop, my friend! 'twere best—
> *Non Di, non homines*—you know the rest.'
>
> A general bustle spread throughout the throng,
> Which seem'd to hold all verse in detestation;
> The angels had of course enough of song
> When upon service; and the generation
> Of ghosts had heard too much in life, not long
> Before, to profit by a new occasion;
> The Monarch, mute till then, exclaim'd, 'What! What!
> *Pye* come again?[3] No more—no more of that!'

[1] 'I am well aware that the public are peculiarly intolerant of such innovations [the hexameter]; not less so than the populace used to be of any foreign fashion, whether of foppery or convenience. Would that this literary intolerance were under the influence of a saner judgment, and regarded the morals more than the manner of a composition; the spirit rather than the form! Would that it were directed against those monstrous combinations of horrors and mockery, lewdness and impiety, with which English poetry has, in our days, first been polluted! . . . The greater the talents of the offender, the greater is his guilt, and the more enduring will be his shame. . . . The school which they have set up may properly be called the Satanic School, for . . . they are especially characterized by a Satanic spirit of pride and audacious impiety.'—Southey's Preface to his *Vision of Judgment*.

[2] 'They would be remembered', said Porson, 'when Homer and Virgil are forgotten—and not until then.'

[3] George III had lost his mind while Pye was still laureate.

Michael stills the clamour, and the laureate proceeds with his defence:

He said—(I only give the heads)—he said,
He meant no harm in scribbling; 'twas his way
Upon all topics; 'twas, besides, his bread,
Of which he butter'd both sides: 'twould delay
Too long the assembly (he was pleased to dread)
And take up rather more time than a day
To name his works—he would but cite a few—
'Wat Tyler'—'Rhymes on Blenheim'—'Waterloo'.

He had written praises of a regicide;
He had written praises of all kings whatever;
He had written for republics far and wide;
And then against them bitterer than ever.
For pantisocracy he once had cried
Aloud, a scheme less moral than 'twas clever;
Then grew a hearty anti-Jacobin—
Had turned his coat—and would have turn'd his skin.

He had sung against all battles, and again
In their high praise and glory; he had call'd
Reviewing 'the ungentle craft', and then
Become as base a critic as e'er crawl'd—
Fed, paid, and pamper'd by the very men
By whom his muse and morals had been maul'd;
He had written much blank verse, and blanker prose,
And more of both than any body knows.

Once more the laureate attempts to read his *Vision*, but

Saint Peter, who had hitherto been known
For an impetuous saint, upraised his keys,
And at the fifth line knock'd the poet down;
Who fell like Phaeton, but more at ease,
Into his lake, for there he did not drown,
A different web being by the Destinies
Woven for the Laureate's final wreath, whene'er
Reform shall happen either here or there.

He first sank to the bottom—like his works,
But soon rose to the surface—like himself;
For all corrupted things are buoy'd, like corks,
By their own rottenness, light as an elf,
Or wisp that flits o'er a morass; he lurks,
It may be, still, like dull books on a shelf,
In his own den, to scrawl some 'Life' or 'Vision',
As Welborn says—'the devil turn'd precisian'.

The ghostly company vanish—but not before King George slips into heaven, where Byron leaves him 'practising the hundredth psalm'.

But it would be unfair to Southey to leave him in Byron's merciless hands. The laureate, it is true, was not of the high order of poets. And yet his official verse is by no means devoid of beauty. The 'Funeral Song' for the Princess Charlotte, composed, with unmistakably deep and genuine feeling, only a year after the laureate had celebrated her marriage, reflects the best of his poetic quality.

In its summer pride arrayed,
Low our Tree of Hope is laid!
Low it lies: in evil hour,
Visiting the bridal bower,
Death hath levell'd root and flower.
Windsor, in thy sacred shade
(This the end of pomp and power!)
Have the rites of death been paid:
Windsor, in thy sacred shade
Is the Flower of Brunswick laid!

Ye whose relics rest around,
Tenants of this funeral ground!
Know ye, Spirits, who is come,
By immitigable doom
Summon'd to the untimely tomb?
Late with youth and splendor crown'd,
Late in beauty's vernal bloom,
Late with love and joyaunce blest!
Never more lamented guest
Was in Windsor laid to rest.

Henry! thou of saintly worth,
Thou to whom thy Windsor gave
Nativity and name and grave,
Thou art in this hallowed earth
Cradled for the immortal birth;
Heavily upon his head
Ancestral crimes were visited:
He, in spirit like a child,
Meek of heart and undefiled,
Patiently his crown resign'd,
And fix'd on heaven his heavenly mind;
Blessing, while he kiss'd the rod,
His Redeemer and his God.
Now may he, in realms of bliss,
Greet a soul as pure as his! . . .

Ye whose relics rest around,
Tenants of this funeral ground;

Even in your immortal spheres,
What fresh yearnings will ye feel
When this earthly guest appears!
Us she leaves in grief and tears;
But to you she will reveal
Tidings of old England's weal;
Of a righteous war pursued,
Long, through evil and through good,
With unshaken fortitude;
Of peace, in battle twice achieved;
Of her fiercest foe subdued,
And Europe from the yoke reliev'd,
Upon that Brabantine plain!
Such the proud, the virtuous story,
Such the great, the endless glory
Of her father's splendid reign!
He who wore the sable mail,
Might, at this heroic tale,
Wish himself on earth again.

One who reverently for thee
Raised the strain of bridal verse,
Flower of Brunswick! mournfully
Lays a garland on thy hearse.

Southey was a man of firm character and honest convictions, and he gave expression to his convictions in his laureate verse with a vigour which quite transcended the traditional limitations of the laureateship. Throughout all the odes run two unfailing strains—deep Christian faith and a profound concern for the moral and political welfare of his country. His mood in these utterances is always grave and dignified, and there is no fulsome flattery.

He established that tradition of aloofness from the tinsel of the court which was to be sustained by Wordsworth and Tennyson. Throughout his laureateship he remained at Keswick. He was on more than one occasion urged by the Ministry to come to London. He was offered the editorship of *The Quarterly* in succession to Gifford. He was asked by the Ministry to establish a new Review. He was offered the position of chief editorial writer on *The Times*, under Walter, with a lucrative share in the management. He was respected at court.[1] He was twice pensioned, and was offered, and declined,

[1] 'I am commanded by the King to convey to you the estimation in which His Majesty holds your distinguished talents, and the usefulness and importance of your literary labours' (letter to Southey from Sir William Knighton, private secretary to George IV, December 1822).

a baronetcy.[1] But throughout his life he elected to remain the 'hermit poet', speaking only as the spirit moved him. And when, near the close of his life, Lord Chancellor Brougham wrote asking his advice about various schemes for providing recognition and financial assistance for men of letters, and suggesting 'one of the existing orders of knighthood, as the Guelphic', Southey replied: 'For myself, if we had a Guelphic order, I should choose to remain a Ghibelline.'

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

The long span of years between Southey's appointment in 1813 and his death in 1843 had wrought many changes. Scott, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats had passed. Browning and Tennyson were becoming known. Samuel Rogers, Hood, Tom Moore, Landor, Campbell, Elizabeth Barrett, Robert and James Montgomery, 'Barry Cornwall', and Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton were notable in their various degrees.[2] But among this varied choir, one poet occupied a position of unquestioned supremacy. That Wordsworth should have been thought of for the laureateship, and should have been the only one thought of, shows the change in the estimation of the office since the days of Cibber and of Pye. With the elimination of the regular duty, with the final realization of Southey's ideal of a position in which the laureate 'could write upon great public events or be silent as the spirit moved', the laureateship had become not so much an office as an honour, not so much an obligation as a decoration.

It was precisely in this spirit that the laureateship was tendered to Wordsworth. The initial offer, made in due form by the Lord Chamberlain, immediately after Southey's death, Wordsworth declined. Thereupon the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, wrote to him:

'I hope you may be induced to reconsider your decision with regard to the appointment of Poet Laureate. The offer was made to you by the Lord Chamberlain, with my entire concurrence, not for the purpose of imposing on you any onerous or disagreeable duties,

[1] 'I have advised the King to adorn the distinction of baronetage with a name the most eminent in literature, and which has claims to respect and honour which literature alone can never confer' (Sir Robert Peel to Robert Southey, February 1, 1835).

[2] Several of these appear as contestants for the laurel in the *Bon Gaultier Ballads*.

'What head', cries Bulwer Lytton,
More fit with laurel to be garlanded
Than this which, curled in many a fragrant coil,
Breathes of Castalia's streams and best Macassar oil?

but in order to pay you that tribute of respect which is justly due to the first of living poets. The Queen entirely approved of the nomination, and there is one unanimous feeling on the part of all who have heard of the proposal (and it is pretty generally known), that there could not be a question about the selection. Do not be deterred by the fear of any obligations which the appointment may be supposed to imply. I will undertake that you shall have nothing required from you. But as the Queen can select for this honourable appointment no one whose claims for respect and honour, on account of eminence as a poet, can be placed in competition with yours, I trust you will not longer hesitate to accept it.'[1]

At this renewed solicitation, Wordsworth wrote to Sir Robert Peel, accepting the laureateship as a 'distinction sanctioned by her Majesty, and one which expresses, upon authority entitled to the highest respect, a sense of the national importance of Poetic Literature'.[2]

With a consistency eminently characteristic of the man, Wordsworth lived up to this interpretation. Under pressure from the Lord Chamberlain he emerged from his mountain solitudes to go once to court, and in a court costume borrowed from Samuel Rogers, solemnly and somewhat frigidly attended a levée. Then he went home again, and for the brief remainder of his life calmly continued his meditations on unworldly and other-worldly themes. During these seven years he wrote not one line of poetry which could be construed as in any way pertaining to the laureateship.[3]

[1] *Life*, William Knight, iii. 435.

[2] Ibid. iii. 436.

[3] Walter Hamilton reprinted in his *Poets Laureate of England* (1879) an egotistic sonnet on the laureateship which he alleged to have been written by Wordsworth after his appointment. Forbes Gray (*Poets Laureate of England*; 1914, p. 289) has traced it to an article in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* (vol. x, p. 276), by 'Bon Gaultier', entitled 'Lays of the Would-be Laureates'. The sonnet was included in the 1849 edition of the *Bon Gaultier Ballads*, but omitted from all subsequent editions.

The *Ode* on the occasion of the installation of the Prince Consort as Chancellor of Cambridge University, while accepted at the time as the work of the poet laureate, and since generally included among the collected poems, was composed with the assistance of his nephew, Christopher Wordsworth. Wordsworth was in ill-health and depressed by the illness of his daughter Dora.

The only act of Wordsworth's life (barring the attendance at the levée) which connects itself with his laureateship, was the presentation, in 1846, of a copy of his poems to the Queen; but the verses which Wordsworth inscribed upon the fly leaf disclaim the connexion:

> Deign, Sovereign Mistress! to accept a lay,
> No Laureate offering of elaborate art:
> But salutation taking its glad way
> From deep recesses of a loyal heart.

This is, in one sense, fortunate, for Wordsworth's sturdy silence helped to emphasize the new independence of the laureateship. But from another point of view, it is to be regretted. No one can contemplate the history of the office without being struck by the recurring contrast between what the laureateship was and what it might have been. Spenser called the laurel the meed of poets sage. Instead, it became the meed of poetasters—hangers on of the court. But Wordsworth, almost from the beginning of his career, had been the veritable sage, aloof, serene, and yet profoundly concerned for the welfare of his native land. At a time when Byron and Shelley and Keats were giving an exotic flavour to English poetry, Wordsworth was the one great *English* poet—the poet of Englishmen. If Wordsworth could have been made laureate, say, in 1803, and, *as* laureate, had written his prose tract on the Convention of Cintra, and the *Happy Warrior*, and the sonnets dedicated 'To Liberty'; if through all the years between 1803 and 1850 he had pursued his wonted course—

> And through the human heart explore my way
> And look and listen, gathering whence I may
> Triumph, and thoughts no bondage can restrain—

and had written all the while, as England's officially recognized and honoured laureate, the laureateship would have come to mean all that, ideally, it might mean—the sage's voice of warning, of encouragement for right things attempted, of triumph in right things achieved. But it was only a sort of august relic upon whom the laureateship was conferred in 1843. Unmoved by the distinction, he was content to spend the little time that was left to him in contemplation of

> The silence that is in the starry sky,
> The sleep that is among the lonely hills.

ALFRED TENNYSON

WORDSWORTH was seventy-three when the laurel was conferred upon him; and when he died in 1850 it was again proposed to make the office a reward for past services rather than 'those present and to come'.[1] Samuel Rogers was eighty-seven when Prince Albert, writing

[1] Not, however, without a discussion in the press on the desirability of discontinuing the office. *The Times*, April 25, 1850, argued that the title had become 'nothing but a nickname'. For a full account of this discussion, see Lounsbury, *Life and Times of Tennyson*, pp. 568 ff.

on behalf of Queen Victoria, tendered him the laureateship. Of an appointment more provocative to the imagination, it would be hard to conceive. Samuel Rogers was far from being one of the greatest living poets, but he was certainly the greatest living link. He was born in 1763, early in the laureateship of William Whitehead; in that year Johnson and Boswell had just met; Percy had not yet published his *Reliques*; Goldsmith had not yet written his *Vicar of Wakefield*. In 1792, when Pye had just been appointed to the laureateship, and Gifford was slaughtering the Della Cruscans, Rogers wrote his *Pleasures of Memory*. From that time to the year 1850, 'Memory Rogers', as he was called, had gone quietly on, writing a poem now and then, but chiefly devoting himself to the art of living. Since the publication of *Italy* in 1828 he had written little; but for forty-seven years his house in St. James's Place had been the Mecca of poets. He had known all the men of letters in the first half of the nineteenth century who were worth knowing, and had written *ave atque vale* against the names of most of them. He was seven years older than Wordsworth and eleven years older than Southey, and yet he had seen both of them grow old and die. If he had accepted the laureateship in 1850, he would still have had five years to enjoy it. Like Wordsworth he probably would not have written a line of laureate verse, but he would have reigned serenely in his own little court in St. James's Place, making the title of laureate synonymous with mentor of poets and artist in the amenities.

When it was learned that Rogers counted himself too old to accept, other names were advanced. The *North British Review* suggested Caroline Bowles Southey; the *Athenaeum* suggested Mrs. Browning, opining that such an appointment 'would in a manner recompense two poets by a single act'. Henry Taylor, 'Barry Cornwall', Sheridan Knowles, and Leigh Hunt were talked of. Hunt was on the whole the most favoured; indeed, he did not hesitate to argue his own claims in the closing pages of his *Autobiography*, which appeared while the matter was pending. The appointment of Wordsworth when he was seventy-three, the offer to Rogers when he was eighty-seven, had disposed the public to think of the laureateship as a tribute to old age. Hunt, Procter, Knowles, and Taylor were all well on in years. The controversy waxed warm in the newspapers; but there were few, apparently, of the self-constituted advisers of the Prime Minister who realized the peculiar fitness of a younger and less widely known poet, Alfred Tennyson.

By this time three collections of Tennyson's poems had appeared and the *Poems* of 1842 had reached a sixth edition. His widening circle of admirers were acclaiming the exquisite music of *The Lady of Shalott* and *The Lotos Eaters*, the romantic richness of *Oenone*, the noble blank verse of *Morte d'Arthur*, and *Ulysses*. *The Palace of Art*, *The Two Voices*, *The Vision of Sin*, and *Locksley Hall* had sounded deeper notes. *The Princess* had appeared in 1847. And finally, in the spring of 1850, *In Memoriam* had established the poet's position as an interpreter of one of the fundamental problems of human thought.

When Tennyson was only twenty, Arthur Hallam had considered him as 'promising fair to be the greatest poet of our generation'. Two years later Matthew Arnold made a similar prophecy. In 1833 the young men of the Cambridge Union debated 'whether Tennyson or Milton is the greater poet', and in the same year the venerable Samuel Rogers declared that Tennyson was 'the most promising genius of our time'. It was not until 1842, however, that Tennyson really came to his own, and even then his admirers were a *coterie* rather than the people at large. It was a notable *coterie*, with Carlyle as one of its most emphatic spokesmen[1]; but there was no assurance yet of the universal acclaim which the poet was later to enjoy. Even in 1850, with *In Memoriam* to his credit, he was not the first to be offered the laureateship.[2] The point is worth emphasizing because, as we look back over Tennyson's rounded career and realize how completely he was the exemplar of what the laureateship ought to be and had always fallen short of being, we find it hard to see how there could ever have been room for hesitation. But after all it was Tennyson himself who gave the title its ampler significance during the forty years of his laureateship. In the eighteenth century it had been a mere petty perquisite. With Southey perhaps it was still that in a measure. With Wordsworth it was a decoration—an

[1] 'Truly it is long since in any English Book, Poetry or Prose, I have felt the pulse of a real man's heart as I do in this same' (Carlyle to Tennyson, 1842).

[2] It is true that Tennyson's name had been casually suggested for the laureateship (by Fanny Kemble in a letter to Lord Francis Egerton) as early as 1843, when Southey died (cf. Rawnsley's *Memories of the Tennysons*, p. 89). It is also true that Sir Robert Peel had granted Tennyson a pension of £200 in 1845. But if Hallam Tennyson's account in the *Memoir* (i. 225) is correct, Peel 'knew nothing' of Tennyson's poetry at that time, and it is not probable that Lord John Russell was much more familiar with it in 1850.

honour to a poet in his extreme old age. So, too, would it have been with Rogers. It was not to be expected that those who had the office within their gift should have detected in Tennyson the national poet that he was to be. But his appointment was at least an unqualified recognition of merit.

To the traditional rôle of the laureate as eulogist and elegist and celebrant of national events, Tennyson yielded as gracefully as his native independence of spirit would permit. He would have been loath to see any of his poems thus described,[1] but he performed the part with all the power of his genius and with unerring taste. The lines 'To the Queen' prefixed to the first 'Laureate Edition' of *In Memoriam* (1851) have three qualities which had hitherto been lamentably lacking in laureate verse. They are simple and straightforward, they are essentially dignified, and they are unmistakably sincere. For their simplicity and dignity, Tennyson's unfailing fineness of taste was responsible. That they were also sincere, and that they seem as sincere to us to-day as they did then, is due partly to the laureate's exceptional good fortune in his sovereign, and partly to his knowledge how to resist the temptations of an office traditionally given to extravagant eulogy. Things had changed since the Georges. Southey, it is true, had been equally sincere in his tribute to the domestic virtues of George III, but Southey unfortunately lacked the sense of humour which would have saved him from making George's virtues the occasion of such an apotheosis as the *Vision of Judgment*. Tennyson was content to pray:

> . . . May you rule as long
> And leave us rulers of your blood
> As noble till the latest day!
> May children of our children say,
> 'She wrought her people lasting good;
>
> 'Her court was pure; her life serene;
> God gave her peace; her land reposed;
> A thousand claims to reverence closed
> In her as Mother, Wife, and Queen.'

[1] 'I hate a subject given me, and still more if it be a public one', he said on one occasion; and again, in refusing to write an installation Ode to Lord Hartington at Cambridge (1892): 'No, certainly not; writing to order is what I hate. They think a poet can write poems to order as a bootmaker makes boots. For the Queen I am obliged to do it, but she has been very kind and has only asked me once or twice. They call the "Ode on the Duke of Wellington" a Laureate Ode. Nothing of the kind! It was written from genuine admiration of the man.' *Memoir* ii. 403.

The tribute to Prince Albert, in the Dedication of the 1862 edition of the *Idylls*, is equally flawless :

> . . . We have lost him ; he is gone.
> We know him now ; all narrow jealousies
> Are silent, and we see him as he moved,
> How modest, kindly, all-accomplished, wise,
> With what sublime repression of himself,
> And in what limits, and how tenderly ;
> Not swaying to this faction or to that ;
> Not making his high place the lawless perch
> Of wing'd ambitions, nor a vantage-ground
> For pleasure ; but thro' all this tract of years
> Wearing the white flower of a blameless life,
> Before a thousand peering littlenesses,
> In that fierce light which beats upon a throne
> And blackens every blot. . . .

The flowing music of the welcome to the

> Sea-King's daughter from over the sea

is another fine example, but it is in the *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* that the traditional kind of laureate verse (though it has already been noted that Tennyson disclaimed the word) rises to the highest point that laureate verse has ever reached. The death of the Duke of Wellington followed hard upon the laureate's appointment. Coming at the beginning of Tennyson's laureate career, it was to be, if not the most notable, at least one of the most stirring and dramatic events of that career, and he rose nobly to the challenge. It seems almost beyond comprehension that the Ode should have been received with such general depreciation by the contemporary press, and that Tennyson should have been accused, not merely of writing a poor poem, but of renewing the old laureate tradition of empty and insincere adulation. There are few to-day who deny either the supreme mastery of its free rhythms or the nobility and sincerity of its mood.

Supreme among the examples of traditional laureate verse—eulogy by the ' king's poet ' of a great personage—the Ode is also a notable link in the laureate tradition. The ' mighty seaman, tender and true ', whose shade Tennyson adjures to rejoice in Wellington's greatness, had been the theme of Pye's ineptitudes and Southey's more respectable efforts. But most of all had Nelson claimed the attention of one whose great laureate verse had all been written before his appointment to the laureateship. ' Wordsworth ', Tennyson wrote just after his own

appointment, 'was a representative Poet Laureate, such a poet as kings should honour, and such an one as would do honour to kings;—making the period of a reign famous by the utterance of memorable words concerning that period.' It was Tennyson's desire that, in what he wrote as laureate, 'the empire of Wordsworth should be asserted', and beside Tennyson's adjuration to Nelson must be placed that greater tribute, 'The Character of a Happy Warrior'—perhaps the noblest pronouncement on the true heroic which our literature possesses.

It is hardly to be expected that the level of the tributes to the Queen, the Prince, and Wellington could have been maintained in all of Tennyson's laureate utterances. When, for example, he turned from these more intimately personal and eulogistic themes to the celebration of national events, he was less happy. The dash and vigour of *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, flung off in a moment on the inspiration of a chance phrase in *The Times*—'Some one had blundered'—make of that poem a manifest exception; but the *National Songs* of 1852,[1] *The Charge of the Heavy Brigade at Balaclava*,[2] *The Defence of Lucknow*,[3] *Riflemen, form*,[4] *Ode sung at the Opening of the National Exhibition*,[5] *Montenegro*,[6] *The Fleet*,[7] and the *Ode on the Opening of the Indian and Colonial Exhibition*,[8] are inferior to the personal poems.

It was not, however, in the discharge of the traditional functions of his office that Tennyson made himself *the* poet laureate. Given to him as a recognition of poetic merit, and worn, it seemed at first, so casually, the title came to mean much that it had never meant before.

[1] *The Third of February, 1852*; *Britons, guard your own*, and *Hands all round*, were inspired by the excitement in England over the *coup d'état* of Louis Napoleon. They were published in *The Examiner*. A later version of *Hands all round* was sung at St. James's Hall, London, on the Queen's Birthday, 1882. It is this later version which usually appears in the collected poems.

[2] The charge took place in 1854. The poem was printed 1882.

[3] The defence of Lucknow occurred in 1857. The poem was printed 1879.

[4] Inspired by the fear that England would be drawn into the war between France, Piedmont, and Austria. It was first printed in *The Times*, May 9, 1859.

[5] Written in 1862 for the second great exhibition, held in South Kensington, and originally entitled, 'May the First, 1862'.

[6] War for independence, 1876–8. The poem was printed 1877.

[7] Printed in *The Times*, April 23, 1885. A plea for a stronger fleet.

[8] The exhibition was opened March 4, 1886. The poem was written at the request of the Prince of Wales.

It came to mean not merely unquestioned primacy in poetic genius among his contemporaries, but also three other things which primacy of poetic genius does not necessarily connote. Approximately throughout his tenure, and certainly during the last thirty years of it, when men called Tennyson 'the laureate', they thought of him as the poet of England and the English, the poet-interpreter of the thought of his time, and the poet-sage.

Laureate of an island-kingdom, he made his own the varying moods of the surrounding sea, whether

> With all
> Its stormy crests that smote the skies;

or

> As the foam bow brightens
> When the wind blows the foam;

or where the angry waves, beating upon an iron coast, would

> Climb and fall
> And roar, rock-thwarted, under bellowing caves
> Beneath the windy wall;

or when there is

> Calm on the seas and silver sleep
> And waves that sway themselves in rest;

or when

> The long day wanes; the slow moon climbs; the deep
> Moans round with many voices.

All the inland aspects of his kingdom, too, he made his own, more minutely than any other poet had done before him—landscapes

> Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard lawns;

the lanes, 'white with May'; fields whence

> Drown'd in yonder living blue
> The lark becomes a sightless song;

forests where

> In deeps unseen
> The topmost elm-tree gather'd green
> From draughts of balmy air;

the varied streams of a well-watered land,

> The slow broad stream
> That, stirr'd with languid pulses of the oar
> Waves all its lazy lilies, and creeps on,
> Barge-laden, to three arches of a bridge
> Crown'd with the minster-towers;

or the brook that

> sparkles out among the fern
> To bicker down the valley . . .
> By twenty thorpes, a little town
> And half a hundred bridges;

the villager's cottage

> Neat and nest-like, half-way up
> The narrow street that clamber'd toward the mill;

or

> an English home—gray twilight pour'd
> On dewy pastures, dewy trees,
> Softer than sleep—all things in order stor'd,
> A haunt of ancient Peace.

And as with the physical aspects of his little world, so with the human aspects—no phase eludes him. The 'Idylls of the Hearth' (as he thought of calling the Enoch Arden volume), coming as it does in the very centre of his laureateship, is his picture of the people over whom he held poetic sway—'the sailor, the farmer, the parson, the city lawyer, the squire, the country maiden, and the old woman who dreams of her past life in a restful old age'. It was after the appearance of the Enoch Arden volume that with increasing frequency he came to be called 'the Poet of the People'.[1] Even those to whom poetry itself meant nothing and poets in general were but empty shadows, knew vaguely about the poet laureate. The *Memoir* records a pretty story of a village boy, who explained that Mr. Tennyson was 'the gentleman who made *poets* for the Queen under the stars,—that policeman had often seen him at it'.

Even his limitations in this sort, while they diminish his greatness, made him at the time so much the more the laureate of his people. If he saw only the surface of character, if he had not the dramatic and analytic power of Browning, his very superficiality and his lucidity of phrase made him the more intelligible to his varied public. If he was 'mid-Victorian', if the heroines of his *Idylls of the King* are only sentimental Victorian ladies with a touch of prudishness, it but ensured him a more responsive audience.

Again, as the poet-interpreter of the thought of his age, he was the laureate *par excellence*. Tennyson's life greatly spanned a great

[1] In the later years his popularity was as universal in the United States as in England. James Russell Lowell called him 'the Laureate of the Tongue as well as of the Nation'.

period. 'I had the honour', wrote Oliver Wendell Holmes to Tennyson when each of the two poets was in his eighty-first year, 'of following you into atmospheric existence at an interval of only twenty-three days, having been born on the twenty-ninth of August, 1809. I am proud of my birth-year, and humbled when I think of who were and who are my coevals, Darwin the destroyer and creator, Lord Houghton, the pleasant and kind-hearted lover of men of letters, Gladstone whom I leave it to you to characterize, but whose vast range of intellectual powers few will question, Mendelssohn, whose music still rings in our ears, and the Laureate whose "jewels five words long" —and many of them a good deal longer—sparkle in our memories and will shine till

Universal darkness buries all.'

Even before Darwin, biology and geology seemed to be shattering the very foundations of the traditional literalism, tearing to tatters the 'Hebrew old clothes' as Carlyle called them. Not singly, but from the lips of many, came the cry, 'Behold, we know not anything'; and in this moment when 'Faith and Form' seemed 'sundered in the night of Fear', Tennyson came as the interpreter to men of their own deepest spiritual struggle. Had he, as Professor Sidgwick has pointed out, been merely defiant, had he denied the cold but conclusive logic of science and indignantly reasserted a moribund theology, *In Memoriam* might have pleased the reactionary, but it would have dropped by the wayside. It was because, frankly accepting the disconcerting facts of science, he sought to find a way out and as frankly admitted that that way lay only through the inconclusive but unassailable 'I have felt'—it was because of this that *In Memoriam* became a veritable *vade mecum* for all thoughtful men in an era of profound spiritual perturbation. It spoke to the religious and brought comfort. It spoke to the scientist, who welcomed its grasp and fairness.[1] It was no slight achievement, in *In Memoriam*, in *The Higher Pantheism*, in *Wages*, in *De Profundis*, to interpret to an age its profoundest problem.

[1] 'Scientific leaders like Herschel, Owen, Sedgwick, and Tyndall regarded him as a champion of Science, and cheered him with words of genuine admiration for his love of nature, for the eagerness with which he welcomed all the latest scientific discoveries, and for his trust in truth' (*Memoir*, i. 250).

'I remember being struck with a note in *Nature*, at the time of your father's death, which dwelt on this last-mentioned aspect of his work, and regarded him as pre-eminently the Poet of Science' (Professor Sidgwick, quoted *Memoir*, i. 253).

Nor were these the only poems in which Tennyson stands out as pre-eminently the representative poet of his age. *Locksley Hall* and *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After* seem to us, as they seemed to Tennyson, 'two of the most historically interesting of his poems as descriptive of the tone of the age at two distant periods of his life'.

It is in such poems as these—and many others could be noted—that Tennyson proved himself the representative poet, the laureate of his time. He was singularly fortunate in his friends. From the old days of the 'Apostles' at Cambridge to the end of his life he was one of a little group of intellectuals—Arthur Hallam (at first), Spedding, Milnes, Jowett, Gladstone—who dealt largely with large topics. They were all keenly interested in his poetry and were constantly suggesting subjects to him, Jowett especially being assiduous in suggestion. Reflecting in his poetry the intellectual interchange of this circle, he reflected the best of the England of his time, and he had the genius to put their, and his, thought into 'memorable words'.

His best, certainly, was of the subjective sort—the interpretation to the men of his generation of their spiritual strivings; but through his intellectual reciprocity with this little group, and through his own meditations as he sat aloof at Farringford and watched the doings of the nation, he was also enabled to fill in some measure the rôle of the poet-sage.

Even before his genius had reached full maturity and before his appointment to the laureateship had officially associated him with the affairs of the nation, his extraordinary skill in phrase-making had enabled him to sound the very key-note of English national life—

> It is the land that freemen till,
> That sober-suited Freedom chose,
> The land, where girt with friends or foes
> A man may speak the thing he will;
>
> A land of settled government,
> A land of just and old renown,
> Where Freedom slowly broadens down
> From precedent to precedent.

Throughout his career this skill in phrase-making enabled him to formulate the mood of the nation.[1]

His voice was often raised in incitement and in behest. Just after

[1] In the last year of his life the Unionist party adopted as the motto of their meetings his line—

> One life, one flag, one fleet, one Throne.

his appointment to the laureateship, the menace of Louis Napoleon inspired *Britons, guard your own*—

> Rise, Britons, rise, if manhood be not dead,
> The world's last tempest darkens overhead ;

and *Hands all round*, which Landor called 'incomparably the best (convivial) lyric in the language'. In the light of recent events, the last two stanzas of this poem are prophetic—

> Gigantic Daughter of the West,
> We drink to thee across the flood,
> We know thee most, we love thee best,
> For art thou not of British blood ?
> Should war's mad blast again be blown,
> Permit not thou the tyrant powers
> To fight thy mother here alone,
> But let thy broadsides roar with ours.
> Hands all round !
> God the tyrant's cause confound !
> To our great kinsmen of the West, my friends,
> And the great name of England, round and round.
>
> O rise, our strong Atlantic sons,
> When war against our freedom springs !
> O speak to Europe thro' your guns !
> They *can* be understood by kings.
> You must not mix our Queen with those
> That wish to keep their people fools ;
> Our freedom's foemen are her foes,
> She comprehends the race she rules.
> Hands all round !
> God the tyrant's cause confound !
> To our great kinsmen of the West, my friends,
> And the great cause of Freedom, round and round.

Of the same period was the stirring appeal for a stronger fleet—*The Fleet*, which, Cardinal Manning said, 'ought to be set to music and sung perpetually as a National Song in every town of the Empire'. Again, after the outbreak of war between France, Piedmont, and Austria (1859), when the powers seemed to be leaguing against England, *Riflemen, Form* rang like a trumpet-call through the length and breadth of the Empire.

Nor did Tennyson hesitate to raise his voice in warning and reproof.

> Too much we make our Ledgers Gods,

he exclaimed in *Hands all round*.[1] Notable, too, is the extraordinarily outspoken condemnation of the House of Lords for having sought to suppress newspaper comment on Louis Napoleon—

> If you be fearful, then must we be bold,
> Our Britain cannot salve a tyrant o'er.
> Better the waste Atlantic roll'd
> On her and us and ours for evermore.
> What! have we fought for Freedom from our prime,
> At last to dodge and palter with a public crime?
>
> Shall we fear *him*? our own we never fear'd.
> From our first Charles by force we wrung our claims.
> Prick'd by the Papal spur, we rear'd,
> We flung the burthen of the second James.
> I say, we *never* fear'd! and as for these,
> We broke them on the land, we drove them on the seas.
>
> And you, my Lords, you make the people muse
> In doubt if you be of our Barons' breed—
> Were those your sires who fought at Lewes?
> Is this the manly strain of Runnymede?
> O fall'n nobility, that, overawed,
> Would lisp in honey'd whispers of this monstrous fraud![2]

Equally outspoken is his appeal on behalf of Canada. The laureate, as Hallam Tennyson wrote, 'gloried in the *Imperii porrecta Maiestas* of England and advocated an ever-closer union with our colonies. My father believed that the federation so formed would be the strongest force for good and for freedom that the world has ever known.' There had been complaints in Parliament of the cost of maintaining Canada, and in the midst of a typical laureate eulogy (the lines to the Queen, affixed to the 1872 edition of *The Idylls*), he seized the opportunity to utter hot words of reproof:

> And that true North, whereof we lately heard
> A strain to shame us, 'keep you to yourselves;
> So loyal is too costly! friends—your love
> Is but a burthen: loose the bond, and go.'
> Is this the tone of empire? here the faith
> That makes us rulers?

In the light of subsequent events, a letter from Lord Dufferin, then Governor-General of Canada, is worth quoting:

'I cannot help writing a line to thank you on behalf of the generous

[1] The quotations are from the first version, printed in *The Examiner* February 17, 1852. The poem was afterwards completely rewritten.
[2] *The Third of February, 1852.*

and loyal people whose government I am now administering, for the spirited denunciation with which you have branded those who are seeking to dissolve the Empire, and to alienate and disgust the inhabitants of this most powerful and prosperous colony. Since arriving here I have had ample opportunity of becoming acquainted with the intimate convictions of the Canadians upon this subject, and with scarcely an individual exception, I find they cling with fanatical tenacity to their birthright as Englishmen, and to their hereditary association in the past and future glories of the mother country. . . . Your noble words have struck responsive fire from every heart; they have been published in every newspaper and have been completely effectual to heal the wounds occasioned by the senseless language of *The Times*.'

Many other instances there were of the laureate's concern with national questions—as, for example, his warning to Mr. Gladstone in 1884,

> Steersman, be not precipitate in thy act
> Of steering,

when the Government wished to push through the Bill for the extension of the franchise, and the opposition pled for the previous consideration of a Redistribution Bill. But these will suffice to show the part which the laureate played in public life. He hesitated long before accepting the peerage which was pressed upon him, and only yielded finally at the wish of his revered Queen. He took no part in the activities of Westminster, and, when he had a message, voiced that message in his verse. He remained to the end the poet-sage.

There could be no more fitting close to this consideration of Tennyson's career as poet-laureate than the words which Gladstone spoke to the citizens of Kirkwall, when the 'freedom of the Burgh' was conferred upon the Laureate and the Prime Minister: 'Your record to-day of the additions which have been made to your municipal body may happen to be examined in distant times, and some may ask, with regard to the Prime Minister, "Who was he and what did he do? We know nothing about him." But the Poet Laureate has written his own song on the hearts of his countrymen, that can never die.'

ALFRED AUSTIN

It is no wonder that the old notion of abolishing the laureateship, mooted a hundred years before during Warton's tenure, should have been revived when Tennyson died in 1892. Tennyson's death was itself a national event comparable to that stately passing which

the laureate had commemorated in 1852. The very service which Tennyson's genius had done the office was likely to prove a disservice to any successor.

> In our great hall then stood a vacant chair
> Fashioned by Merlin ere he past away. . . .
> And Merlin call'd it 'the Siege Perilous',
> Perilous for good and ill. . . .

In the newspaper controversy which ensued, Swinburne was prominently mentioned. 'When Tennyson died,' writes Edmund Gosse in his recent life of that poet, 'expert opinion was practically unanimous in desiring to see the laureateship offered to Swinburne. It is reported that Queen Victoria, discussing the matter with Gladstone, said, "I am told that Mr. Swinburne is the best poet in my dominions." But Gladstone held the view that the turbulency of Swinburne's political opinions, particularly as expressed with regard to certain friendly foreign powers, made it impossible even to consider his claims to the laurel.'

Mr. Gladstone's words, if correctly reported, were a model of diplomatic restraint, not only because Gladstone himself had been the special object of the poet's vituperation[1]; Swinburne as laureate would have been a veritable Pandora's box. It is true that *Poems and Ballads, First Series*, with their 'lilies and languors of virtue' and 'roses and raptures of vice' were by now ancient history. 'Hushed now', as Owen Seaman wrote in his parody,[2]

> . . . . is the bibulous bubble
> Of 'lithe and lascivious' throats;
> Long stript and extinct is the stubble
> Of hoary and harvested oats;
> From the sweets that are sour as the sorrel's
> The bees have abortively swarmed;
> And Algernon's earlier morals
> Are fairly reformed.

In the royal remoteness of Victoria's 'I am told' one can guess that

[1] All is well, if o'er the monument recording England's ruin
Time shall read, inscribed in triumph, Gladstone's name.
Thieves and murderers, hands yet red with blood and tongues yet black with lies,
Clap and clamour—'Parnell spurs his Gladstone well';

and the amazingly bitter 'Apostasy' with its motto from Victor Hugo: *'Et Judas m'a dit: Traître!'*

[2] 'The Battle of the Bays,' a series of parodies of the poets eligible for the vacant laureateship. The little volume was published in 1896, just after the appointment of Austin.

the tremendous splash of 1866 had sent not even a ripple to the throne; but though roses and raptures still blossomed occasionally in Swinburne's verse, the difficulties now were of another sort

A passionate radical from the outset, Swinburne had fallen under the spell of Mazzini and had become the arch-republican of English letters. The 'friendly foreign powers', Russia and Germany, had inevitably fallen under his ban. He did not mince matters. For the oppressed realm of the 'White Czar' there was only one cure.

> Pity mad with passion, anguish mad with shame,
> Call aloud on justice by her darker name:
> Love grows hate for Love's sake; life takes death for guide.
> Night hath none but one red star—Tyrannicide.
> 'God or man be swift; hope sickens with delay:
> Smite, and send him howling down his father's way!'

Equally outspoken and bitter were his frequent denunciations of

> Base Germany, blatant in guile.

Here, certainly, was no language for a court poet.

Nor was his attitude toward his own country such that the court could possibly have set the seal of its approval upon him as the official poet-laureate. Mr. Gosse, in his defence of Swinburne's loyalty,[1] is inclined, one ventures to think, to gloss the facts. 'If a reader has the curiosity to isolate all that Swinburne has said about republicanism apart from Italy, and France in relation to Italy, he will be surprised to find how small the residue is. In particular, there is not so far as I recollect, in all the voluminous writings of Swinburne, a single line in which the English Constitution or the Monarchy is attacked. . . . It is only in the visionary verses called "Perinde ac Cadaver" that anything can be pointed to that resembles a reproach to this country for not joining the confederacy of the liberated nations, and even then the answer comes in the question, "We have filed the teeth of the snake, Monarchy, how should it bite?" . . . This attitude to the Government of his own country must not be overlooked, because Swinburne was perfectly fearless, and, if it had pleased him to do so, would have attacked English institutions as freely as he denounced "Strong Germany, girdled with guile".'

But it is precisely in these 'visionary verses', 'Perinde ac Cadaver', that the spirit of Liberty upbraids England for lying inert and resting content with

[1] *Life*, pp. 290 ff.

. . . queens without stings,
Scotched princes and fangless kings:

and in 'A Word from the Psalmist', the plea of the Conservative—

And what so fair has the world beholden,
And what so firm had withstood the years,
As Monarchy bound in chains all golden,
And Freedom guarded about with peers,

is answered by the warning of a time when votes under a constitutional monarchy shall cease to appease an indignant people, and revolution shall stalk abroad in the land—

How long—for haply not now much longer—
Shall fear put faith in a faithless creed,
And shapes and shadows of truths be stronger
In strong men's eyes than the truth indeed?
If freedom be not a word that dies when spoken,
If justice be not a dream whence men must wake,
How shall not the bonds of the thraldom of old be broken,
And right put might in the hands of them that break?
For clear as a tocsin from the steeple
Is the cry gone forth along the land,
Take heed, ye unwise among the people;
O ye fools, when will ye understand?

Nor was Swinburne content with such enunciations of philosophical radicalism. Mr. Gosse says that, being perfectly fearless, Swinburne 'would have attacked English institutions if it had pleased him to do so'. But it did please him to do so, and he not only attacked them, but went out of his way to insult them. In 'The Twilight of the Lords', 'Clear the Way', 'A Word for the Country', and 'A Word for the Nation', he not only attacked the House of Lords but also delivered himself in such language as this:

If his grandsire did service in battle,
If his grandam was kissed by a king,
Must men to my lord be as cattle
Or as apes that he leads in a string?
To deem so, to dream so,
Would bid the world proclaim
The dastards for bastards,
Not heirs of England's fame.

Not in spite but in right of dishonour,
There are actors who trample your boards
Till the earth that endures you upon her
Grows weary to bear you, my lords.

Your token is broken,
  It will not pass for gold:
Your glory looks hoary,
  Your sun in heaven turns cold.

They are worthy to reign on their brothers,
  To contemn them as clods and as carles,
Who are Graces by grace of such mothers
  As brightened the bed of King Charles.
    What manner of banner,
      What fame is this they flaunt,
    That Britain, soul-smitten,
      Should shrink before their vaunt?

Bright sons of sublime prostitution,
  You are made of the mire of the street
Where your grandmothers walked in pollution
  Till a coronet shone at their feet.
    Your graces, whose faces
      Bear high the bastard's brand,
    Seem stronger no longer
      Than all this honest land.

And yet when Tennyson died, 'expert opinion was practically unanimous in desiring to see the laureateship offered to Swinburne'. This statement is not a matter of personal opinion, but a simple matter of fact, and, at the risk of further prolonging a digression on a poet who was not numbered among the official list, it deserves a little consideration. For, after all, the laureateship has on more than one occasion been illuminated by those who have not worn the laurel.

In the light of Swinburne's record, his rejection by the court would seem to us a foregone conclusion; and yet 'expert opinion' was undoubtedly right, on many grounds, in urging his name. Certainly he was, as Queen Victoria had been told, 'the best poet' in her dominions. From the appearance of 'Atalanta in Calydon' Swinburne had stood out as the master of a palpitating and magnificent music. If the laureateship was to be given for technical brilliance in verse, the honour was Swinburne's. But this was not all. Swinburne, who had carried his political radicalism to the point of extravagance, had been at the same time the most passionately patriotic poet of his generation—and in some ways the most far-seeing.[1] One has only to turn to the later volumes of his works—the *Poems and Ballads*,

[1] 'When the proper time for publication comes it will be found, with interest and perhaps surprise, how accurately Swinburne predicted the treachery of Germany almost with his latest lyric breath.' Gosse, *Life of Swinburne*, p. 293.

Third Series, with the stirring Jubilee poem of 1887 ('The Commonweal'), and 'The Armada'; *Astrophel and Other Poems*, with its passionately loyal 'Ode to England', or 'Astrophel' itself with its triumphant faith that the land which bore Sidney can never be brought to shame—

How should this be, while England is? What need of answer beyond thy name?

—one has only to turn to such poems as these—and they are many—to realize what a laureate Swinburne might have been, and what his advocates had in mind when they urged his appointment.

It was not to be—but at least it is an alluring might-have-been. With his abundant lyrical gift, and his Ariel-like irresponsibility, Swinburne had been something of an anomaly in the mid-Victorian time:

> It was as though a garland of red roses
> Had fallen about the hood of some smug nun
> When irresponsibly dropped as from the sun,
> In fulth of numbers freaked with musical closes,
> Upon Victoria's formal middle time
> His leaves of rhythm and rhyme.

His subsequent appointment to the laureateship with the approval of contemporaries whom he had so puzzled and insulted and enthralled, would have but added one little anomaly the more. Swinburne, however, was clearly out of the running. Other names were freely proposed for the vacant post; but Gladstone, with characteristic concern for the well-being of an office which appealed to his antiquarian taste, hesitated. On October 25, 1892, Jowett wrote to Hallam Tennyson: 'Gladstone came to see me to-day, and was very kind. He said, "There is a question in which you can perhaps help me. Whom shall we make laureate?" (I did not repeat to him what you told me.) I said, "Don't fill it up. Nobody expects it to be filled up." "Well," he said, "I shall be in no hurry."'[1] A year later (October 7, 1893), Gladstone wrote a letter (unpublished) to Sir Herbert Warren, President of Magdalen College, Oxford, from which I am permitted to quote: 'Nor is it to be understood that the non-appointment of a successor to Lord Tennyson is owing to the absence of persons sufficiently qualified. But the history of the office is curious, and seems to show that an appointment, to be prosperous, requires to combine a number of conditions.' What these conditions were,

[1] *Life and Letters of Benjamin Jowett*, ed. Abbott & Campbell, London, 1897, vol. ii, p. 459.

Gladstone did not say; but that he found no one to fulfil them is shown by the fact that he had made no appointment when he went out of office in March, 1894.

Meanwhile the papers continued to discuss eligible candidates. Kipling's name was most often heard, his admirers pointing out that he was the poet of empire and embodied in his verse all the vigour and ambition of the English race. Others named were William Morris, George Meredith, Coventry Patmore, Austin Dobson, William Watson, Robert Buchanan, Sir Edwin Arnold, Alfred Austin, and Lewis Morris. Of these, as the years went by without a choice, Lewis Morris apparently felt the disappointment most keenly. In a letter to Sir Herbert Warren, written the year after Jowett's *Life and Letters* appeared, he attributed to Jowett's influence 'the deplorable resolution which our good octogenarian, Mr. G., was persuaded to make'; and in his volume of essays entitled *The New Rambler* (London, 1905, p. 107) he speaks of Gladstone's delay with peculiar bitterness: 'Common report said that he wandered about hopelessly . . . imploring aid in making up his mind.' Jowett he describes as 'that teacher whose astuteness probably in holding his tongue seems to have made him an authority on almost everything. . . . "I told him to make no appointment at all," boasts the venerable sage'. The result, according to Morris, was that the Premier neglected 'a plain and obvious duty, with the calamitous result, which everybody else had foretold, of putting back the clock for eighty years'. Lord Rosebery, who was Prime Minister from March, 1894, to June, 1895, also refrained; and the appointment fell into the hands of Lord Salisbury.

In 1892 Mr. Saintsbury had written: 'Keep the seat ready (even with a dummy in it if better is not to be had) and the man will come'; and it was perhaps with some such provisional attitude that Lord Salisbury finally made his choice. Two motives may be detected in the selection of Alfred Austin from the list already given. Tennyson had associated the laureateship in the popular mind with a peculiar devotion to the physical beauties of English life. Two years before Tennyson's death, William Watson had edited a collection of Austin's poems, under the title of *English Lyrics*. This volume, which contains the best of his work, established Austin as the most genuine heir of this phase of the Tennysonian tradition. 'Our literature prior to Lord Tennyson,' wrote Watson in his introduction, 'contains no such full utterance of this dual passion, this enthusiasm of nationality, underlying an intimate and affectionate knowledge of every bird that

makes an English summer melodious, and every flower that sweetens English air; and it seems to me that if the question be asked, "Who among the poets of a later generation can be said to share with Lord Tennyson the quality of being in this double sense English through and through?" any competent person trying to answer the question honestly will find the name of the author of this volume of "English Lyrics" the first to rise to his lips.'

Of Austin's poems in this kind, 'Defence of English Spring' and 'Primroses' are probably the best examples.[1]

The other element—less creditable perhaps to the Prime Minister's taste—in fixing Lord Salisbury's choice was unquestionably the fact that Austin was a prominent Conservative journalist, editor of *The National Review*, and a leader-writer and special correspondent for *The Standard*. In the latter connexion, especially, he had been able to do good service to the party. He had also made two (unsuccessful) attempts to enter Parliament, and had spoken a number of times on behalf of other candidates. According to Austin's *Autobiography*, he was on intimate terms with Lord Salisbury and had on several occasions influenced his political decisions—notably at the time of the Electoral Reform Bill and the Redistribution Bill of 1884.[2] Nor was Austin unwilling to use his poetical powers in the cause. Only a few months before his appointment, he published a series of sonnets dealing with England's alleged 'desertion' of Armenia, and entitled 'A Vindication of England'. Here was a poet who not only sustained a part of the Tennyson tradition, but was also intimate with the Prime Minister and useful to the Government.

Of a choice apparently so safe, the immediate results were singularly unhappy. Austin's appointment was announced on the first of January, 1896, and eleven days later *The Times* published a poem by the new laureate entitled 'Jameson's Ride'. Comparatively recent as is the event which the unfortunate poet chose to celebrate, it may not be out of place briefly to recall the circumstances. The growing

[1] There is a simplicity and charm about these poems which go far to justify Watson's encomium; but the versification is extraordinarily careless. For example, the 'Defence', which is in rhymed couplets, includes such a rhyme as this:

Lo! wheresoe'er you onward press
Shine milky ways of primroses.

[2] Austin says that he played 'a decisive part' in this matter, but actually he seems to have been only an incidental intermediary between the Editor of *The Standard* and Lord Salisbury. Tennyson's poetical warning to Gladstone on this occasion has already been noted.

unrest of the 'Uitlanders' in the Transvaal under the injustices of Boer rule had culminated in a plan to rise in armed insurrection, hold Johannesburg, and attack Pretoria. Cecil Rhodes, then Premier of the Cape, had been secretly appealed to for aid. In the closing days of December 1895, at Rhodes's instigation, or at least with his consent, his lieutenant, Dr. Jameson, led a small band of raiders across the Transvaal border and moved toward Johannesburg. They had expected co-operation from the insurrectionists, but none was forthcoming. They were surrounded by the Boers near Dornkop, lost many of their number, and were compelled to surrender. The surrender occurred on the second of January, and a week later Austin published his poem in *The Times*.

As a spirited bit of verse by an 'unofficial' person, 'Jameson's Ride' would have passed muster well enough; but as the first pronouncement by the new laureate, it could hardly have been worse. Jameson's expedition was neither approved by the British Government nor welcomed by a majority of the Uitlanders. Nothing could have been better calculated to embarrass the effort which England was making to adjust the relations of British subjects in the Transvaal to the Boer Government, and, as a matter of fact, the raid became a veritable thorn in the side of England during the vexed years that immediately followed. Austin had the dubious satisfaction of seeing his hero tried in a British court for the very deed which the laureate had been so prompt to celebrate; and had to learn, as Southey had learned before him, that while an unofficial poet may speak contemptuously of statesmen who 'addle their pates over points of law', a poet laureate must be more discreet.[1]

In the same year Austin committed a literary indiscretion almost as flagrant as his political one. *England's Darling*, a drama in verse, with King Alfred as hero, appeared with a flourish of trumpets, as the first work to come from the pen of the new laureate. Austin himself did much of the trumpeting: 'In the spacious gallery of commanding characters commemorated in English Poetry, there is a strange and unaccountable blank. When we look for the most illustrious figure of all, there is an empty niche. The greatest of Englishmen has never been celebrated by an English poet.'[2] If

[1] The reader of Austin's *Autobiography*, which is replete with references to, and quotations from, his own poems, will look in vain for any reference to 'Jameson's Ride'.

[2] Preface to *England's Darling*. The 'poetical Pye', by the way, had written an epic on Alfred.

Austin meant that the poet had now arrived who could celebrate the greatest of Englishmen, he found few to agree with him. By the braggadocio of its introduction, *England's Darling* forced comparison, to its own great disadvantage, with Tennyson's *Harold* and Swinburne's *Mary Stuart*.

The first notable public occasion which afforded Austin an opportunity to write *ex officio* was the Diamond Jubilee, which fell in the second year of his laureateship. The last few stanzas afford a sufficient example:

> . . . With glowing hearts and proud glad tears
> The children of her Island Realm to-day
> Recall her sixty venerable years
> Of virtuous sway.
>
> Now too from where Saint Lawrence winds adown
> 'Twixt forests felled and plains that feel the plough,
> And Ganges jewels the Imperial Crown
> That girds her brow;
>
> From Afric's Cape, where loyal watchdogs bark,
> And Britain's sceptre ne'er shall be withdrawn,
> And that young Continent that greets the dark
> When we the dawn;
>
> From steel-capped promontories stern and strong,
> And lone isles mounting guard upon the main,
> Hither her subjects wend to hail her long
> Resplendent reign.
>
> And ever when mid-June's musk-roses blow
> Our race will celebrate Victoria's name,
> And even England's greatness gain a glow
> From Her pure fame.

'My verses,' records Austin in his *Autobiography*, 'appeared in the chief London papers, and I got a specially prepared copy printed for the Queen, which I took down to Windsor, together with some roses from my garden. . . . Shortly she appeared, just back from a drive, and received my proffered gift with that mixture of graciousness and dignity observed by all who approached her.'

During the remaining sixteen years of his laureateship, Austin fulfilled the obligation of his office with that sort of undistinguished adequacy which his previous work (barring the single indiscretion) had taught the public to expect. One of the poems of this period evoked a tribute from Lord Salisbury which the ingenuous laureate

twice records in virtually the same words in his *Autobiography*: 'I remember . . . when I had been Poet Laureate for some little time . . . that on my publishing in *The Times* "The East to the West and the West to the East", the two being Great Britain and the United States, Lord Salisbury, then at the Foreign Office, wrote to me, "The Muse on this occasion has been an excellent diplomatist".' The poem was written in 1898 at the time of the Spanish-American War. It justifies inclusion for its own sake as well as on the grounds just noted.

What is the Voice I hear
On the wind of the Western Sea?
Sentinel! Listen from out Cape Clear,
And say what the voice may be.
'Tis a proud free People calling loud to a People proud and free.'

'And it says to them, "Kinsmen, hail!
We severed have been too long;
Now let us have done with a worn-out tale,
The tale of an ancient wrong,
And our friendship last long as Love doth last, and be stronger than Death is strong."'

Answer them, Sons of the self-same race,
And blood of the self-same clan,
Let us speak with each other, face to face,
And answer, as man to man,
And loyally love and trust each other, as none but free men can.

Now, fling them out to the breeze,
Shamrock, Thistle, and Rose!
And the Star-Spangled Banner unfurl with these,
A message to friends and foes,
Wherever the sails of Peace are seen, and wherever the War-wind blows.

A message to bond and thrall to wake,
For, whenever we come, we twain,
The throne of the Tyrant shall rock and quake,
And his menace be void and vain;
For you are lords of a strong young land, and we are the lords of the main.

Yes, this is the Voice of the bluff March gale,
'We severed have been too long;
But now we have done with a worn-out tale.
The tale of an ancient wrong,
And our friendship shall last as Love doth last, and be stronger than Death is strong.'

Austin's career embraced the death of Queen Victoria and the entire reign of her successor. To quote the various commemorative poems which the laureate wrote during this period would overcrowd these pages; but one at least should not be passed over. 'The Truce of God: A King's Bequest,' written at the death of King Edward, was, according to Austin himself, 'the first note struck, whether in verse or prose, in what happily soon became the concerted voice of the nation'.

What darkness deep as wintry gloom
O'ershadows joyous Spring?
In vain the vernal orchards bloom,
Vainly the woodlands sing.
A Royal shroud,
A mournful crowd,
Are all now left of One but yesterday a King.

Thrones have there been of hateful fame,
Reared upon wanton war:
He we have lost still linked his name
With peace at home, afar.
For peace he wrought,
His constant thought
Being to shield his Realm against strife's baleful star.

So let us now all seek to wrest
From fateful feuds release,
And, mindful of his wise bequest,
From factious clamours cease.
Make on the path he trod,
A sacred Truce of God,
The path that points and leads to patriotic Peace.

ROBERT BRIDGES

Austin's death in 1913 opened again the old question of finding a worthy successor—not to Austin himself, who had, in a measure, proved to be the 'dummy' of Mr. Saintsbury's suggestion—but to Tennyson. Twenty-one years had passed since the former discussion. Death had removed a number of the group. Other poets, then unknown or in the making, had taken their places. Swinburne was dead. Kipling had fallen into the background. The noble music of *The Recessional* (1899) had been blurred by the savage snarl of *The Islanders* (1902). With the disillusionments of the Boer War, the fact that he had, as some one said, 'anthemed the nation' into the struggle, was not cordially remembered. The cry for Kipling as laureate, vociferant in 1892–6, was far less audible in 1913. Austin Dobson and William Watson were left from the earlier group. Newbolt, Noyes,

Yeats, Masefield, and Stephen Phillips had come to the fore. But no one name stood out. The poetry of the one unquestionably great figure of the day, Thomas Hardy, was not consonant with the laureate mood. There was uncertainty among the prophets. But one thing at least was sure—that a Prime Minister of the literary predilections of Mr. Asquith would make no blunder of taste.

Meanwhile the 'Revival of Poetry', which had already become the most characteristic feature of the literary history of the reign of George V, had borne fruit in the publication of a volume of *Georgian Poetry*, containing the choicest outpourings of the younger choir; and this volume was dedicated, not to one of the younger generation, but to a poet whose earliest volume of verse had appeared in 1873. From that year, Robert Bridges (whose activities as a physician had not prevented a steadfast devotion to the muse) had gone quietly on, producing lyrics, masques,[1] historical plays in verse,[2] a narrative poem,[3] and a sonnet sequence.[4] There had been nothing spectacular about him. He was not numbered among the 'popular' poets, but a gathering of his *Shorter Poems* published by Bell in 1890 had run through many editions, and though there was a mutual lack of recognition between him and the Press, his actual place with the critics may be estimated by such a book as Arthur Symons's *Studies in Prose and Verse*, 1904, or by the volume of Miles's 'Poets of the Nineteenth Century',[5] which was entitled *Robert Bridges and Contemporary Poets*. In 1912 his poems were collected in one volume for cheap issue by the Clarendon Press, in a series which had wide sale and contained no other living author. And now the authors of *Georgian Poetry*, who in the new awakening of the time found themselves coming into their own at last, dedicated their volume to him.

In the light of these facts it was not surprising—though there were many on both sides of the Atlantic who expressed their surprise—that, six weeks after Austin's death, Mr. Asquith appointed Robert Bridges

[1] 'Prometheus the Firegiver' and 'Demeter'.

[2] 'The History of Nero' (2 parts), 'Achilles of Scyros', 'Palicio', 'The Return of Ulysses', 'The Christian Captives', 'Humours of the Court', 'The Feast of Bacchus'.

[3] 'Eros and Psyche'.

[4] 'The Growth of Love'.

[5] London, 1906, pp. 113–78. For a brief biography and critical estimate of Mr. Bridges, the reader is referred to the prefatory note by Sir Herbert Warren included with the selections in Miles's volume. The note (dated July, 1905) concludes: 'If, then . . . he is Elizabethan and Miltonic . . . he is also eminently of his own day. . . . Of this, the surest sign is that he has been able to form something of a School, and that his influence may be clearly seen in the work of younger men.'

poet laureate.[1] He was now in his seventieth year, and had for some time renounced poetry for other interests. He cannot be suspected of desiring the honour, and it is certain that Mr. Asquith's invitation was made on the same terms as Sir Robert Peel's to Wordsworth, on the plain understanding that there were no official duties. Mr. Bridges was persuaded to accept it on the urgence of his poetical friends, who wished the laureateship to be delivered from such things. As if to demonstrate his absolute freedom, he forthwith published a comic poem 'Fly Catchers' in *Poetry and Drama*. After this peculiar inaugural utterance he offered his homage to the King in some Christmas verses, which his Majesty ordered to be published.

CHRISTMAS EVE[2]

Pax Hominibus Bonae Voluntatis

A frosty Christmas eve | when the stars were shining
Fared I forth alone | where westward falls the hill,
And from many a village | in the water'd valley
Distant music reached me | peals of bells a-ringing:
The constellated sounds | ran sprinkling on earth's floor
As the dark vault above | with stars was spangled o'er.

Then sped my thought to keep | that first Christmas of all
When the shepherds watching | by their folds ere the dawn
Heard music in the fields | and marvelling could not tell
Whether it were angels | or the bright stars singing.

Now blessed be the towers | that crown England so fair
That stand up strong in prayer | unto God for our souls:
Blessed be their founders | (said I) and our country-folk
Who are ringing for Christ | in the belfrys to-night
With arms lifted to clutch | the rattling ropes that race
Into the dark above | and the mad romping din.

But to me heard afar | it was heavenly music,
Angels' song comforting | as the comfort of Christ
When He spake tenderly | to his sorrowful flock:
The old words came to me | by the riches of time
Mellowed and transfigured | as I stood on the hill
Hark'ning in the aspect | of th' eternal silence.

This message of peace came on the eve of the greatest war of the world, when *Pax Hominibus* was to be set at nought. Since the first English laureate recorded the moment when Londoners listened with

[1] July 17, 1913; gazetted July 26.
[2] Published in *The Times*, December 24, 'by His Majesty's express desire'.

tense anxiety to the sound of the Dutch cannon,[1] no court-poet had been called to do more in his odes than view, as from a great and safe distance, the plain of Europe—

Swept with confus'd alarms of struggle and flight.

The blood of England had been shed many times, but the routine of English life had gone on undisturbed. Mr. Bridges found himself the accredited national poet when England was learning to know bombardments by Zeppelins and aeroplanes, and when everything except the one great problem seemed to have ceased to matter.

The somewhat exotic measures in which Mr. Bridges likes to experiment have perhaps left the public at large (the public to which Tennyson appealed) unstirred. But for all that, he has responded no less truly, and perhaps more finely, to the impulses of a time of unparalleled stress. Characteristically of the man, one of the noblest of these responses is to be found in two of the closing stanzas of his Tercentenary Ode to Shakespeare.

Man knoweth but as in a dream of his own desire
The thing that is good for man, and he dreameth well:
But the lot of the gentle heart is hard
That is cast in an epoch of life,
When evil is knotted and demons fight,
Who know not, they, that the lowest lot
Is treachery, hate, and trust in sin
And perseverance in ill,
Doom'd to oblivious Hell,
To pass with the shames unspoken of men away,
Wash'd out with their tombs by the grey unpitying tears of Heaven.

But ye, dear Youth, who lightly in the day of fury
Put on England's glory as a common coat,
And in your stature of masking grace
Stood forth warriors complete,
No praise o'ershadoweth yours to-day,
Walking out of the home of love
To match the deeds of all the dead.—
Alas! alas! fair Peace,
These were thy blossoming roses.
Look on thy shame, fair Peace, thy tearful shame!
Turn to thine isle, fair Peace; return thou and guard it well!

[1] 'The noise of the cannon from both navies reached our ears about the city, so that all men being alarmed with it, and in a dreadful suspense of the event which we knew was then deciding, every one went following the sound as his fancy led him; and leaving the town almost empty, some took towards the park, some across the river, others down it; all seeking the noise in the depth of silence.' Dryden, *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*.

In the same year as this poem, 1916, he published *The Spirit of Man*, an anthology in prose and verse selected for reading during the trials of war. Much of the prose translation, specially from the Greek, was from his hand. The book fulfilled its aim, meeting with wide acceptance; it ran through many issues and is still popular. Occasionally some event has provoked his utterance; the memorial sonnet to Lord Kitchener is in keeping with the laureate's fine restraint and high nobility of phrase.

> Unflinching hero, watchful to foresee
> And face thy country's peril wheresoe'er,
> Directing war and peace with equal care,
> Till by long duty ennobled thou wert he
> Whom England call'd, and bade 'Set my arm free
> To serve my will and save my honour fair',—
> What day the foe presumed on her despair,
> And she herself had trust in none but thee:
> Among Herculean deeds the miracle
> That mass'd the labour of ten years in one
> Shall be thy monument. Thy work is done
> Ere we could thank thee; and the high sea swell
> Surgeth unheeding where thy proud ship fell
> By the lone Orkneys at the set of sun.

Characteristic, too, is the exalted spirit in which he welcomed the entrance of the United States into the great war.

> Brothers in blood! They who this wrong began
> To wreck our commonwealth, will rue the day
> When first they challenged freemen to the fray,
> And with the Briton dared the American.
> Now are we pledged to win the Rights of man;
> Labour and Justice now shall have their way,
> And in a League of Peace—God grant we may—
> Transform the earth, not patch up the old plan.
> Sure is our hope since he who led your nation
> Spake for mankind, and ye arose in awe
> Of that high call to work the world's salvation;
> Clearing your minds of all estranging blindness
> In the vision of Beauty and the Spirit's law,
> Freedom and Honour and sweet Loving-kindness.

The years of Mr. Bridges' laureateship have been like no other years which it ever fell to a poet laureate to play his part in. Our first thought, indeed, as we look back over them, is that a poet laureate, in so far as any flavour of the traditional court poet and official eulogist clings to the word, had no part to play. Fortu-

nately not Wordsworth himself was more free from such a taint than is Mr. Bridges' austere muse. Mr. Bridges is like no other laureate and the time was like no other time. Amidst a babel of talk and a multiplicity of war poetry, the laureate kept long silences, and when he emerged from his retirement, the accredited voice struck a note of rare fineness, peculiarly precious in a time when so much jangled out of tune. Here are two examples :

THE WEST FRONT

An English Mother, on looking into Masefield's 'Old Front Line'

No country know I so well
as this landscape of Hell.
Why bring you to my pain
these shadow'd effigys
Of barb'd wire, riven trees,
the corpse-strewn blasted plain ?

And the names—Hebuterne
Bethune and La Bassée—
I have nothing to learn—
Contalmaison, Boisselle,
And one where night and day
my heart would pray and dwell ;

A desert sanctuary,
where in holy vigil
Year-long I have held my faith
against th' imaginings
Of horror and agony,
in an ordeal above

The tears of suffering
and took aid of angels :
This was the temple of God :
no mortuary of kings
Ever gathered the spoils
of such chivalry and love :

No pilgrim shrine soe'er
hath assembled such prayer—
With rich incense-wafted
ritual and requiem
Not beauteous batter'd Rheims
nor lorn Jerusalem.

TRAFALGAR SQUARE

September, 1917

Fool that I was: my heart was sore,
Yea sick for the myriad wounded men,
The maim'd in the war: I had grief for each one:
And I came in the gay September sun
To the open smile of Trafalgar Square;
Where many a lad with a limb fordone
Loll'd by the lion-guarded column
That holdeth Nelson statued thereon
Upright in the air.

The Parliament towers and the Abbey towers,
The white Horseguards and grey Whitehall,
He looketh on all,
Past Somerset House and the river's bend
To the pillar'd dome of St. Paul,
That slumbers confessing God's solemn blessing
On England's glory, to keep it ours—
While children true her prowess renew
And throng from the ends of the earth to defend
Freedom and honour—till Earth shall end.

The gentle unjealous Shakespeare, I trow,
In his country tomb of peaceful fame,
Must feel exiled from life and glow
If he think of this man with his warrior claim,
Who looketh o'er London as if 'twere his own,
As he standeth in stone, aloft and alone,
Sailing the sky with one arm and one eye.

The following Christmas poem of 1917, which takes up that written on the eve of the war, was sent to *The Times* and *The Manchester Guardian*:

CHRISTMAS EVE, 1917

Many happy returns, sweet Babe, of the day!
Didst not thou sow good seed in the world, thy field?
Cam'st thou to save the poor? Thy poor yet pine.
Thousands to-day suffer death-pangs like thine;
Our jewels of life are spilt on the ground as dross;
Ten thousand mothers stand beneath the cross.
Peace to men of goodwill was the angels' song:
Now there is fiercer war, worse filth and wrong.
If thou didst sow good seed, is this the yield?
Shall not thy folk be quell'd in dead dismay?

Nay, with a larger hope we are fed and heal'd
Than e'er was reveal'd to the saints who died so strong;

For while men slept the seed had quicken'd unseen.
Britain is as a field whereon the corn is green.

Of trial and dark tribulation this vision is born—
Britain as a field green with the springing corn.
While we slumber'd the seed was growing unseen.
Happy returns of the day, dear Babe, we say.

England has buried her sins with her fathers' bones.
Thou shalt be throned on the ruin of kingly thrones.
The wish of thine heart is rooted in carnal mind;
For good seed didst thou sow in the world thy field:
It shall ripen in gold and harvest an hundredfold.
Peace shall come as a flood upon all mankind;
Love shall comfort and succour the poor that are pined.

Wherever our gentle children are wander'd and sped,
Simple apostles thine of the world to come,
They carried the living seed of the living Bread,
The angel-song and the gospel of Christendom,
That while the nation slept was springing unseen.

So though we be sorely stricken we feel no dread:
Our thousand sons suffer death-pangs like thine:
It is sown in blood for a reaping in joy divine;
It shall ripen in gold and harvest an hundredfold:
Thy Peace and Love shall hallow our care and teen,
Shall bind in fellowship all the folk of the earth
To kneel at thy cradle, Babe, and bless thy birth.

Ring we the bells up and down in country and town,
And keep the old feast unholpen of preacher or priest,
Wishing thee happy returns, and thy Mother May,
Ever happier and happier returns, dear Christ, of thy day.

Throughout the war, and since the war was won, Mr. Bridges has performed a service to which this history affords no parallel. The war poems of former laureates have sometimes fostered, have usually been content to echo, popular feeling. Jubilation over England's successes, reprobation of her enemies, have been the sufficient theme. But during the years since 1914, the fluctuating impulses that have found vent in a plethora of ephemeral war poetry have passed the laureate by. Neither the initial glamours of the stay-at-home poets nor the subsequent disillusionments of the soldier poets colour his pages. Mr. Bridges is not a 'popular' poet, and he is totally indifferent to the popular notion that the laureate of the moment should be the versifier of what the public is thinking—at the moment.[1] He has not

[1] 'In the House of Commons Mr. Bottomley succeeded in raising the usual laugh by a repetition of his attack on what he conceives to be unworthy inactivity on the part of the Poet Laureate. Had Mr. Bridges,

rushed into print, as, for example, Austin did on the occasion of the Jameson Raid; but an examination of *October and Other Poems*[1] amply disproves the accusation of 'unworthy inactivity'. Between the stirring words of 'Wake up, England' (August, 1914) and the heart-searching 'Britannia Victrix' of November, 1918, are thirteen war-poems of memorable quality and substantial length, besides several slighter pieces. If the point were worth arguing, it might be observed that this is a larger number of poems immediately inspired by national events than Tennyson produced during the first seven years of his laureateship—a period which included the Crimean war and the Indian Mutiny; but the public to whom mere facility in rhyming and versing must be the right describing note to know a poet by is, fortunately, not the public that matters. It is not the ephemeral impulses of the war which find expression in Mr. Bridges' pages, but rather the greater emotions—the emotions which will still emerge as the perspective lengthens, and will sum up all the rest. The youth of England,

> Walking out of the home of love
> To match the deeds of all the dead;

the 'Chivalry of the Sea'; the mother's poignant knowledge of every detail of the 'Old Front Line'; the generous aid from Australia, India, America; the moments of doubt and despair as the strain grew intolerably long; the resurgence of the spirit under the spell of that great tradition of which Nelson in Trafalgar Square,

> As he standeth in stone, aloft and alone,
> Sailing the sky with one arm and one eye,

is the enduring symbol[2]—these are the moods that will be remembered, as other things grow dim. Most important of all, because, let us hope,

he asked, written any of the hymns sung lately on the solemn occasion in Westminster Abbey, had he written anything about the great events of the war, and would the Prime Minister consider the appointment of a really national bard?' (*The Times*, Dec. 17, 1920.)

[1] *October and Other Poems with Occasional Verses on the War*, by Robert Bridges, Poet Laureate. Heinemann, 1920.

[2] As he was, indeed, to two of the laureate's greatest predecessors. Cf. pp. 188–9. It is worth noting in this connexion that Nelson inspired another poem of Mr. Bridges, 'Der Tag: Nelson and Beatty,' a vigorous and delightfully humorous story, in the ballad manner, of a visit paid by the spirit of Nelson to the Great Fleet, as the German ships came out of the Bight on 'that grey November morning'. The poem was printed anonymously in *The Times*, and few of the many who enjoyed it there suspected that it was from the pen of the laureate. It is reprinted in *October and Other Poems*.

most abiding, is the mood of 'Britannia Victrix'—not the mad intoxication of victory, but the self-searching, the humility, and withal the charity of spirit which only great moments can bring.

Now when jubilant bells resound
And thy sons come laurel-crown'd,
After all thy years of woe
Thou no longer canst forgo,
Now thy tears are loos'd to flow.

Land, dear land, whose sea-built shore
Nurseth warriors evermore,
Land, whence Freedom far and lone
Round the earth her speech has thrown
Like a planet's luminous zone,—
In thy strength and calm defiance
Hold mankind in love's alliance!

Beauteous art thou, but the foes
Of thy beauty are not those
Who lie tangled and dismay'd;
Fearless one, be yet afraid
Lest thyself thyself condemn
In the wrong that ruin'd them.

From John Dryden, the poet advocate, to Robert Bridges, the poets' poet—so does the laureateship round out its two centuries and a half as a formally recognized office of the English court. And now, lest the distinctive characteristics of the office should have been lost sight of, in the process of considering those who held it, let us gather up the threads.

The story of the laureateship, as we have followed it from its formal inception in 1668, presents three phases. The first and rather anomalous phase comprises the tenures of Dryden, Shadwell, and Tate. The appointment was by letters patent. No definite duties were imposed, and the significance of the office was what the laureate of the moment happened to make it. Dryden, by virtue of his genius, gave to it a genuine significance in the life of his time. Shadwell and Tate left it colourless.

In the early years of the eighteenth century, the laureateship fell under the appointment of the Lord Chamberlain, and the laureate found himself a member of the official household, with a definite status and a definite duty. The duty of elaborating a poetical compliment, twice a year, to monarchs whose personalities, at best, were

not very inspiring, and then having the words drowned by instrumental music and 'squeaking choristers', conduced neither to care in selection on the part of the court, nor readiness on the part of good poets to accept the position. The nominees, as we have seen, generally fitted the scant measure of the office; and the laureateship became, to the disparagement of all poetic ideals, a sort of upper clerkship—one among a number of oddities in the Lord Chamberlain's official 'Household'.

The abolishment of the annual odes, while due perhaps as much to force of circumstances as to a reaction of taste, rescued the office from its ignominious position, and the acceptance of the office by such poets as Wordsworth and Tennyson imparted to it a dignity which it had lacked since the days of Dryden.

Meanwhile, the laureate has continued to be nominally an officer of his Majesty's household, in the department of the Lord Chamberlain.[1] However free he may seem, as heir to an office which Wordsworth accepted and Tennyson adorned, the fact remains that he is still a paid officer of the court, ranking between the Gentleman-Usher of the Black Rod and the Marine Painter. However free he may be—and undoubtedly is—to 'write or be silent as the spirit moves', the *fact* remains; and that this fact, small as it is, is not wholly meaningless may be illustrated alike from the experience of the earliest of the modern laureates, and from the attitude of *Punch* and the Daily Press towards the present one. When Southey wrote his *Carmen Triumphale* (1814) he included a bitter denunciation of Napoleon; but he was semi-officially reminded 'that *office* imposes upon a man many restraints', and was unwillingly induced to expunge the offending stanzas.[2] Mr. Bridges may be trusted to be more discreet; it is probable enough that his sympathies have not always been agreeable to national politics; but the popular mind, still obsessed by the old notion of the 'duties' of the office, begrudges him the poet's privilege to 'write or be silent as the spirit moves'.

The words in which Sir Robert Peel offered the laureateship to Wordsworth are worth recalling: 'The offer was made to you . . . in order to pay you that tribute of respect which is justly due to the first of living poets.' Equally worth remembering is Wordsworth's reply, that he accepted the laureateship 'as a distinction sanctioned by her Majesty, and one which expresses . . .

[1] See Appendix V.

[2] *Correspondence*, iv. 52. See p. 169.

a sense of the national importance of Poetic Literature'. The defect of the laureateship as an *office* is that when it falls vacant, it must be filled, irrespective of whether the field of selection includes a great poet or only a collection of little ones. But if no such necessity for continuity existed, the State would be in a position to confer the *title* only when a poet had proved himself. It is true that the initiative in conferring the title would still lie with the Government, and prime ministers would still be fallible. Mr. Gladstone, for example, would probably have been no more inclined to confer the *title* upon Swinburne in 1892 than he was to appoint Swinburne to the *office*. But if, in 1896, there had been no vacancy in her Majesty's Household to be filled, Lord Salisbury might have continued Gladstone's policy of watchful waiting. An interval of sixteen years, terminated by the conferring of the title upon Thomas Hardy in recognition of the completed *Dynasts*, or an interval of twenty-one years, terminated by the conferring of the title upon Robert Bridges in recognition of the *Poetical Works* of 1913, would have been by no means too long. Such a policy in the future would free the conferring of the honour from the slightest semblance of official routine, and the laureateship would become an unqualified and an unquestioned recognition of 'the national importance of Poetic Literature'.

APPENDIX I

THE OFFICE OF HISTORIOGRAPHER ROYAL

The earliest record of this office associates it with the laureateship. Bernard Andreas, who was designated poet-laureate in two warrants of November 21 and November 28, 1486, respectively (preserved by Rymer, MS. Addit. 4617, and *Foedera*, xii. 317) was also appointed (circa 1490) historiographer to King Henry VII (*supra*, p. 25). Bernard's *History of the reign of Henry VII* (1502) announces on the title-page that it is the work of *Bernardi Andreae Tholosatis, Poetae Laureati, Regii Historiographi*. At the death of Bernard the office lapsed until the reign of James I, whose historiographer royal was Thomas Dempster. Dempster's salary was £200 (cf. Nichols, *Progresses of King James* iii, 136, and *D.N.B.* xiv. 337). In 1661 it was recreated as a result of the plea of James Howell to Charles II that 'amongst those who are observed to be the prudentst and best policed Nations, ther is a Minister of State appointed and qualified with the Title of Historiographer Generall'. Howell's letter, which presents an elaborately reasoned argument for the establishment of the position, may be found in *Familiar Letters of James Howell*, ed. Joseph Jacobs, London, 1892, p. 687. Upon his appointment, Howell was granted £200 'as his Majesty's free gift' (ibid., p. 669). I can find no evidence for the statement in *D.N.B.* (Life of Howell) that he was granted an additional pension of £100. Howell's monument, placed formerly, according to the directions in his will, 'att the foote of next great Piller this side the little Quier' in Temple Church, is now in the triforium. It gives his title as *Regius Historiographus in Anglia Primus*. An engraving of it may be seen in Jacobs, p. xlix.

The office remained vacant from Howell's death in 1666 till the appointment by letters patent of John Dryden, August 18, 1670, the patent serving to conjoin the office of historiographer with the laureateship which he had held since April 13, 1668. The amount of the pension granted in Dryden's patent, £200, continued to be the emolument of the position of historiographer until the cessation of the office. Upon Dryden's loss of both offices in 1688 they were conferred upon Thomas Shadwell, by patent dated August 29, 1689. Upon Shadwell's death Thomas Rymer was appointed historiographer

by warrant of December 8, 1692, his patent being dated December 23. 1692. The monument of his service is the *Foedera*, the thirteenth volume of which was dedicated to the Queen, *eiusdem Serenissimae Reginae Historiographo*, a few months before his death.

As Rymer neared his end, Swift began to covet the office. As early as August 22, 1710, he writes to Addison bespeaking his interest in the matter (see Swift's *Correspondence*, ed. Elrington Ball, i. 190). Three weeks after Rymer's death, Viscount Bolingbroke writes to the Duke of Shrewsbury (January 5, 1713/14): 'My Lord; My brother, the Dean of St. Patrick's is, you know, an historian. . . . We have often talked him up to an undertaking. . . . I mean the writing a complete history of our own country. Rymer's death creates an opportunity of making this his duty, if your Grace will be so good as to bestow the place of Historiographer upon him' (ibid., Appendix to vol. ii, p. 419). On April 15, Swift addresses a memorial to Queen Anne on the subject (see *Works*, ed. Scott, v. 477). On July 3, Swift makes further reference, in a letter to the Earl of Oxford, to the possibility of securing the position (ibid., ii. 161). On July 17, Arbuthnot writes to Swift that he is trying to obtain Lady Masham's influence (ibid., ii. 184). Meanwhile, however, Thomas Madox, the legal antiquary, had been appointed historiographer royal on July 12 (see Addit. MSS. 4572, f. 108). On July 20, Charles Ford writes to Swift: 'I thought you had heard the Historiographer's place had been disposed of this fortnight. I know no more of him who has it than that his name is Madox' (*Correspondence*, ed. Ball, ii. 188). On July 25, Swift writes to Arbuthnot: 'As to the Historiographer's place, I now hear it has been disposed of these three weeks to one Madox . . . so there is an end of that, and of twenty reflections one might make upon it. If the Queen is indifferent in those matters, I may well be so too' (ibid., ii. 196).

Thomas Madox was succeeded in the office of historiographer royal by Robert Stephens, and he, about 1732, by Jenkin Thomas Phillips (see *Pope*, Elwin and Courthope, iii. 370 n.), to whom Pope refers in the Epistle to Augustus:

> And from the moment we oblige the Town,
> Expect a place, or pension from the Crown;
> Or, dubbed Historian by express command,
> To enroll your triumphs over sea and land,
> Be called to Court to plan some work divine
> As once for Louis, Boileau, and Racine.

Upon Phillips's death, February 22, 1755, Richard Stonhewer was appointed historiographer royal (see Chamberlayne's *Notitia* for 1755), presumably through the influence of the Duke of Grafton. Stonhewer was a friend of Thomas Gray's and heir (through Mason) of Gray's MSS. and library. Probably upon Stonhewer's death on January 30, 1809 (I have been unable to find the date of the appointment), the office was given to Louis Dutens (see *Gent. Mag.*, 1812, pt. ii, pp. 197 and 391), an eccentric Frenchman whose autobiography (translated, 1805, as *Memoirs of a Traveler now in Retirement*) was a nine-days' wonder. Dutens edited the works of Leibnitz and produced many short treatises on a great variety of topics. At Dutens's death in his eighty-second year, May 23, 1812, Southey, then poet-laureate, sought to obtain the appointment and renew the traditional union of the two offices. 'Dutens is dead', he writes to the Rev. Herbert Hill, May 30, 1812 (*Letters*, ed. J. W. Warter, London, 1856, vol. ii, p. 275). 'The first intelligence of this was sent me by Wynn, who had already desired Croker to apply to the Lord Chamberlain, in whose gift the office is. . . . The salary is a nominal £400; that is, £280, after all deductions.' Southey's efforts were unsuccessful. He writes to Captain Southey on June 17: 'You may have seen by the newspapers that the old Frenchman is dead, and that he might as well have lived till Doomsday, for any good that has fallen to me by his departure. I had plenty of friends upon the occasion, and plenty of applications were made; but the appointment lay with the chamberlain, and the Prince chose to recommend one of his chaplains; so that good ship the Historiographer, is given to Stanier Clarke, a painstaking man, and so far fit for it, but a most extraordinary blockhead, and so far unfit. My comfort is that it is only worth half as much as I was led to expect. Lord Lonsdale applied for me, so did Croker, without my knowledge, and in the most handsome manner he wrote to Lord Liverpool, to Ryder, and to the chamberlain; Scott wrote to Lord Melville. See what a nibble I had, though Stanier Clarke caught the fish' (ibid., p. 281).

The Rev. James Stanier Clarke, remembered chiefly for *The Life of James II*, 1816, held the post for twenty-five years. At some time during this period, the office, which, like the laureateship, had been included in the king's household under the charge of the Lord Chamberlain since the beginning of the eighteenth century, lost this status. *Whitaker's Almanack* for 1828 and ensuing years omits it from the list, though retaining the laureateship. On the death of Clarke, the

novelist, G. P. R. James was appointed, May 20, 1837 (*Gent. Mag.*, 1837, p. 81). He edited 'Letters Illustrative of the Reign of William III from 1696 to 1708. Addressed to the Duke of Shrewsbury by James Vernon, Secretary of State. . . . London, 1841.' With the appointment of James, the post of historiographer, so long disjoined from the laureateship, renews in a measure its ancient associations; for James was not only a novelist of sorts but also restored the traditional union of Clio and Euterpe by writing verses.

The death of G. P. R. James, May 9, 1860, terminated the office of historiographer royal.

APPENDIX II

JONSON'S PATENT OF 1616

Patent Roll, 13 James I, 29. (Roll 2084, No. 12)

Iames by the grace of god &c To all men to whome theis p̄ſent̄ shall come Greeting. knowe yee that we for divers good conſideracions vs att this p̄ſent eſpecially moving and in conſideracion of the good and aceptable service done and to be done vnto vs by our welbeloved Servaunt Beniamyn Iohnſon of our eſpeciall grace certaine knowledge and mere mocion have given and graunted and by theis p̄ſent̄ for vs our heires and succeſſors doe give and graunt vnto the said Beniamyn Iohnson a certaine a uytie or penc̄on of one hundred markes of lawfull money of England by the yeare. To have hould and yerelie to receive the said Annuity or pencion of one hundred markes by the yeare to the said Beniamyn Iohnson and his Aſſignes from the ffeaſt of the birth of our lord God laſte paſt before the date hereof for and during the naturall life of him the said Beniamyn Iohnson out of the Treaſure of vs our heires and succeſſors in the Receipt of the Exchequer of vs our heires and succeſſors by the hand̄ of the Trēr and Chamb̄laines of vs our heires and succeſſors there for the tyme being att the ffoure vſuall termes of the yere that is to ſay att the ffeaſt of Thannunciacion of the bleſſed virgin mary the Nativitie of S^t^ Iohn Baptiſt S^t^ micheall Th'archangell and the Birth of our lord god quarte[r]ly by even porcions to be paid Although expreſſe mencion &c In witnes whereof &c. Wittnes our selfe at Weſtminster the firſt day of ffebruary.

p ſre de puato Sigillo &c.

APPENDIX III

JONSON'S PATENT OF 1630

Patent Roll, 6 Charles I, part 11. (Roll 2543, No. 37)

Charles by the grace of God kinge of England Scotland ffrance and Ireland defendor of the faith &c To the Treaſorer Chauncellor Vndertrẽr Chamberlaines and Barons of the Exchequer of vs our heires and ſucceſſors nowe being and that hereafter shalbe and to all other the Officers and mynifters of the said Court and of the receipt there nowe being and that hereafter shalbe and all others to whome theis p̄ſent̄ shall come or to whome itt shall or may apperteyne greeting. Whereas our late most deere father kinge Iames of happy memory by his l̄res Patent̄ vnder the great Seale of England bearing date att Westm̄ the first daie of ffebruarie in the thirteenth yeare of his Reigne of England (for the consideraĉons therein expressed did give and graunt vnto our welbeloved servant Beniamin Iohnson one añuyty or yearely Penĉon of one hundred markes of lawfull money of England during his life to be payd out of the said Exchequer att the ffeaſt̄ of the Anunciaĉon of the Blessed virgin marie the Nativity of S^t^ Iohn Baptiſt, S^t^ Michaell tharchangell and the birth of our lord God quarterly. As by the said l̄res Patent̄ more att large may appeare, w^ch^ Añuity or Penĉon togeather with the said l̄res Pattent̄ the said Beniamine Iohnson hath lately surrendred vnto vs. knowe yee nowe that wee for divers good consideraĉons vs att this p̄ſent eſpecially moving and in consideraĉon of the good and acceptable service donne vnto vs and our said father by the said Beniamyn Iohnson and especially to incourage him to p̄ceede in those services of his witt and penn w^ch^ wee have enioyned vnto hym, and w^ch^ wee expect from him are graciously pleased to augment and increase the said Añuity or Penĉon of one hundred markes vnto an Añuyty of one hundred pound̄ of lawfull money of England for his life and for the better effecting thereof of our especiall grace ∂taine knowledge and meere moĉon, wee have given and graunted and by these present̄ for vs our heires and ſucceſſors vpon the surrender of the Añuyty aforesaide doe give and graunt vnto the saide Beniamin Iohnson one Añuyty or yearely Penĉon of one hundred pound̄ of lawfull money of England by the yeare. To have and yearely to receive the said Añuyty or yearely Penĉon of one hundred pound̄ of lawfull money

of England by the yeare vnto the said Beniamin Iohnson and his Aſſignes from the ffeaſt of the birth of our lord God laſt paſt before the date hereof for and during the naturall life of hym the said Beniamin Iohnson att the Receipt of the Exchequer of vs our heires and ſucceſſors out of the Treasure of vs our heires and ſucceſſors from tyme to tyme there remayning by the handꝭ of the Treasorer and Chaṁblaines of vs our heires and Succeſſors there for the tyme being att the foresaid fower vſuall termes of the yeare (that is to saie) att the ffeaſt of the Annunciac̃on of the blessed virgin marie the Nativity of Saint John Baptist Sᵗ michaell Tharchangell and the birth of our lord God by even and equall porc̃ons quarterly to be payed. The first payment thereof to begynn att the ffeaſt of the Anunciac̃on of the blessed virgin mary next before the date of theis p̄ſentꝭ. Wherefore our will and pleasure is, and wee doe by theis p̄ſentꝭ for vs our heires and ſucceſſors require coṁaund and authorise the saide Treasorer Chauncellor Vndertr̃er Chamberlens and Barons and other Officers and mynisters of the said Exchequer nowe and for the tyme being not onely to paye or cause to be payed vnto the said Beniamin Iohnson or his Assignes the said Añuyty or yearely Penc̃on of one hundred poundꝭ of lawfull money of England according to our pleasure before expressed, but alsoe from tyme to tyme to give full allowance of the same according to the true meaning of theis p̄ſentꝭ, And theis p̄ſentꝭ or the Inrollment thereof shalbe vnto all men whome it shall concerne a sufficient warrant and dischardge for the paying and allowing of the same accordingly without anie further or other warrant to be in that behalf pcured or obteyned. And further knowe yee that wee of our more especiall grace c̄taine knowledge and meere moc̃on have given and graunted and by theis p̄ſentꝭ for vs our heires and Succeſſors doe give and graunt vnto the saide Beniamyn Iohnson and his Assignes one Terse of Canary Spanish wyne yearely, To have hould receive pceive and take the said Terse of Canary Spanish wyne vnto the said Beniamyn Iohnson and his Assignes during the terme of his naturall life out of our store of wynes yearely, and from tyme to tyme remayning att or in our Cellers within or belonging to our Pallace of Whitehall. And for the better effecting of our will and pleasure herein wee doe hereby require and Coṁaund all and singuler our Officers and ministers whome itt shall or maie conc̄ne, or whoe shall have the care or charge of our said wynes, that they or some of them doe deliver or cause to be delivered the saide Terse of Wyne yearely, and once in every yeare vnto the saide Beniamyne Iohnson or his

Assignes during the terme of his naturall life att such tyme and tymes as he or they shall demaund or desire the same, And theis p̄ſent̄ or the Inrollment thereof shalbe vnto all men whome it shall concerne a sufficient warrant and discharge in that behalfe. Although expresse menc̄on &c In witnes &c. Witnes our selfe att Westm̄ the three and twentith day of Aprill.

p ℔re de priuato sigillo &c.

APPENDIX IV

DAVENANT'S PATENT OF 1638

Patent Roll, 14 Charles I, 9. (Roll 2804, No. 33)

Charles by the grace of God &c To the Treaſurar Chauncellor vndertreaſurar, Chamberlaines and Barons of the Exchequer now being and that hereafter shalbe and to all other the Officers and miniſters of our said Courte and of the Receipt there for the tyme being and to all other to whome it shall or may appertaine greeting, knowe yea that wee of our eſpeciall grace certaine knowledg and meere moc̄on and in conſiderac̄on of seruice heretofore done and hereafter to be done vnto vs by Willm̄ Davenant gentl̄ have given and granted and by theis p̄ſent doe give and graunt vnto the said William Davenante one añuitie or yearlie penc̄on of one hundred pound̄ of lawfull money of England by the yeare To have hold enioy and yearelie to receave the said Añuity or Penc̄on of one hundred pound̄ by the yeare to him the saide William Davenante from the feaſt of the Añunciac̄on of the blessed Virgin mary laſt paſt before the date hereof for and during our pleasure out of the Treaſure remaineing in the Receipt of our Exchequer att Weſtminſter by the hand̄ of the Treaſurar Vndertreaſurar Chamberlaines Barons and other the officers for the tyme being att the two vſuall feast̄ or tearmes of the yeare, that is to saie att the feaſt̄ of Saint michaell the Archangell and the Añuncac̄on of the blessed virgin marie by even porc̄ons halfe yearelie to be paide. And theis our ℔res Pattent̄ or the Inrollement thereof shalbe vnto all and everie the officers of our said Exchequer reſpectivelie for the tyme being for makeing due payment from tyme to tyme of the said Añuitie or yearelie penc̄on in manner and forme aforesaide to the said Willm̄ Davenant and his aſſignes and for doeing and p̄formeing all and singuler the p̄miſſes according to the true intent

and meaning of theis p̄ſent̄ a good sufficient and absolute warrante and discharge any order direc̄on co̅maunde declarea̅on or aſſigna̅on heretofore signified and given by vs or our late deare father king Iames of happie memorie for reſtrainte of payment or allowance of pen̅cons or Añuityes or any other reſtrainte aſſigna̅on declarea̅on matter or thing whatſoever to the contrarie in any wiſe notwithſtanding Although expreſſe men̅con &c In witnes &c Witnes ourſelfe att Weſtm̃ the thirtenth day of December

p ſ̄re de privato Sigillo.

APPENDIX V

STATUS AND EMOLUMENTS OF THE POET LAUREATE

In Chamberlayne's *Angliae Notitia, or the Present State of England*, the laureate is first mentioned in the year 1670, the year, it may be noted, of the issue of letters patent to John Dryden. Here the laureate appears in the following company: 'One Library Keeper, One Publick Notary, One Poet Laureat.' In *Angliae Notitia* for 1672: 'Also amongst His Majesties Servants in Ordinary are reckoned, One Geographer, One Historiographer, One Hydrographer, One Library Keeper, One Poet Laureat, One Publick Notary.' The issue of 1682 shifts 'One Poet Laureat' to the head of the group named above, and appends 'the most genious (*sic*) and learned John Dryden'. The issue of 1683 gives him both of his titles: 'One Poet Laureat and One Historiographer Royal, the most ingenious and learned John Dryden.' *Angliae Notitia* for 1702 includes the laureate among 'The Queen's Officers and Servants in Ordinary above Stairs under the Lord Chamberlain'. Later eighteenth-century court-lists group the laureate along with the master of the revels, the historiographer royal, and the inspector of plays, but, as might be expected in the times of the Georges, place the literary group in suggestive proximity to the 'Pages of the Back Stairs', the 'Operator Teeth', the 'Rat-killer',[1] the 'Moletaker', the 'Pinmaker', the 'Distiller of Milk-water', and other functionaries equally serviceable to a practical court. The literary group, which moves steadily toward the bottom of the list during the third quarter of the eighteenth century, has by

[1] See the poet Gray's sportive refusal of the laureateship, quoted, p. 136.

1779 acquired a new member, 'the Embellisher of Letters to Foreign Princes', but has meanwhile yielded place to the 'Principal Barber'.

At present, among the officers of his Majesty's Household in the department of the Lord Chamberlain, the poet laureate appears just after the gentleman usher of the black rod and at the head of a group consisting of the marine painter, the surveyor of the King's pictures and works of art, the keeper of the king's armoury, and the librarian of Windsor Castle.

Since 1913, 'the Fourth Class of the Household Civil Uniform' has been authorized for the laureate.

During the tenures of Dryden and Shadwell the emolument, or as it was called at that time the 'fee', for the combined offices of poet-laureate and historiographer royal was £300. Of this amount, it seems to have been understood from the beginning that £200 belonged to the office of historiographer (see p. 62); and when in 1692 the two offices were disjoined, the emolument of the laureate fell at once to £100 a year. At that amount it has remained, nominally at least, ever since. It may be noted in passing that in the eighteenth century the laureate fared worse than most of the other officers and servitors of the court. The master of the revels received £200, the historiographer royal £200, the inspector of plays £400, while even the court barber received £170. Only the rat-killer, who might fairly have argued that his task was more exacting than the laureate's, knew the pangs of envy. His salary was £48 3*s.* 4*d.*

With due regard to the tradition of Ben Jonson, the laureate's fee of £100 was annually supplemented by a 'butt of sack'. The butt of sack is specified in the letters patent of Dryden, Shadwell, and Tate, and seems to have been granted regularly to their successors in office until the year 1790. At this time, the laureate of the moment, Henry James Pye, petitioned to have the butt of sack commuted for cash.[1] The cash value of the butt of sack was estimated at £26, but instead of *adding* this amount to the £100, the careful George *included* it as part of the £100. When Southey was appointed, he wrote to Scott: 'The butt of sack is now wickedly commuted to £26; which said sum, unlike the canary, is subject to income-tax, land-tax, and heaven knows

[1] This was an unhappy reversal of Ben Jonson's famous appeal:

> What can the cause be when the King hath given
> His poet sack, the household will not pay? . . .
> For in the genius of a poet's verse
> The King's fame lives. Go now, deny his tierce!

what beside. The whole net income is little more or less than £90' (*Correspondence*, iv. 49). Scott replied: 'Is there no getting rid of that iniquitous *modus*, and requiring the butt in kind? I would have you think of it; I know no man so well entitled to Xeres' sack as yourself, though many bards would make a better figure at drinking it. I should think that in due time a memorial might get some relief in this part of the appointment—it should be at least £100 wet and £100 dry. When you have carried your point of discarding the ode, and my point of getting the sack, you will be exactly in the situation of Davy in the farce, who stipulates for more wages, less work, and the key to the ale-cellar' (Lockhart, iv. 119).

Scott's pious wishes were not, however, to be gratified; and the emolument of the laureate remains to-day substantially as it was in Southey's time. The present books of the Lord Chamberlain's department show an annual payment to the poet-laureate of £72, and, upon the accounts of the Lord Steward's department, is still recorded an annual payment to the poet-laureate of £27, 'in lieu of a butt of sack'.

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